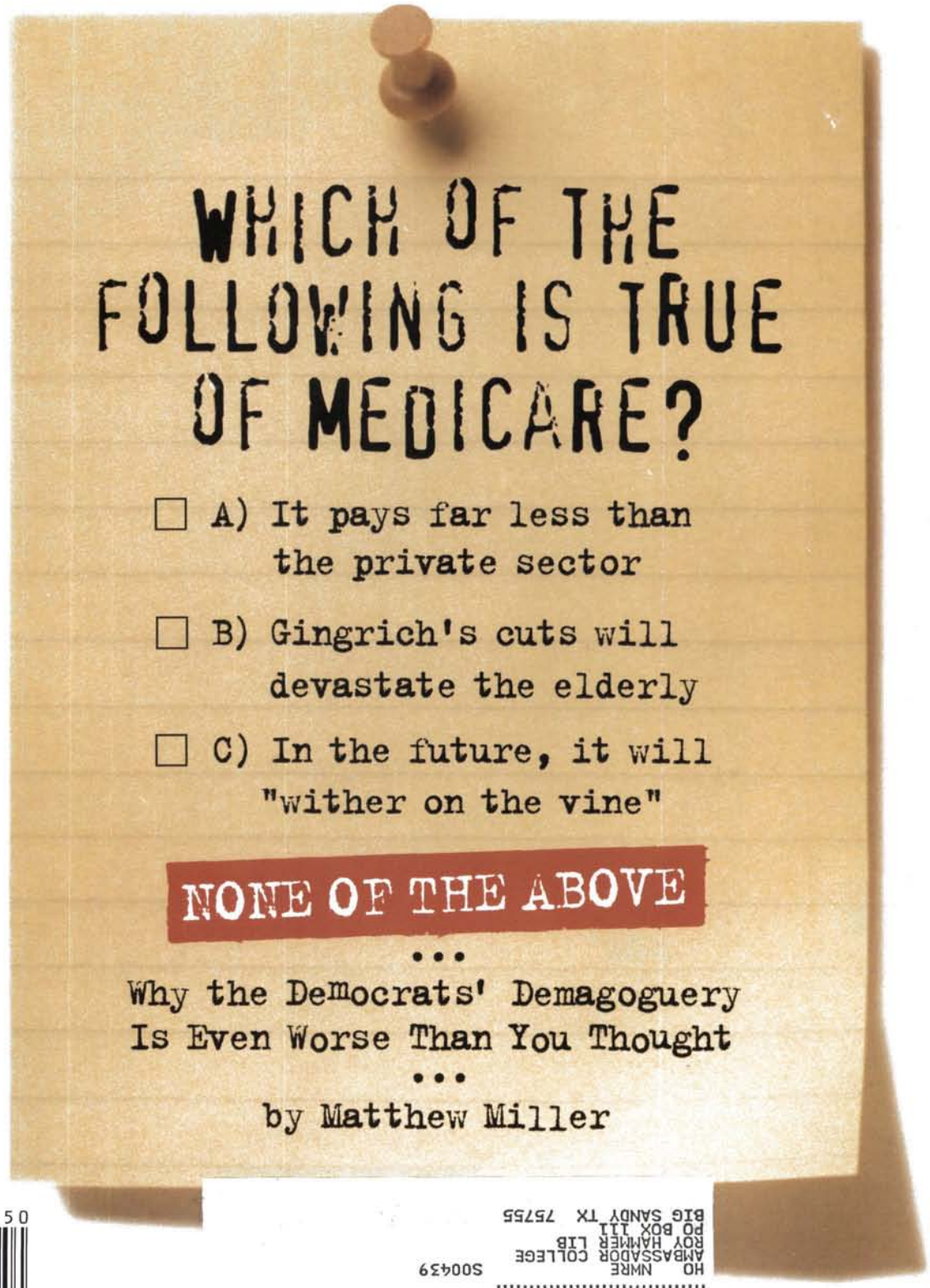
WILL THE PUBLIC PLEASE GROW UP?—*THE EDITORS*

DECEMBER 11, 1995 • $2.95

THE NEW REPUBLIC

Russell Kirk • Alexander Lebed • Graham Greene • Phil Gramm


WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING IS TRUE OF MEDICARE?
☐ A) It pays far less than the private sector
☐ B) Gingrich's cuts will devastate the elderly
☐ C) In the future, it will "wither on the vine"
NONE OF THE ABOVE
• • •
Why the Democrats' Demagoguery Is Even Worse Than You Thought
• • •
by Matthew Miller

#BXBKDML ******* ALL FOR SDC
#75755ABA11RY007# 012996
HO NWRE S00439
AMBASSADOR COLLEGE
ROY HAMMER LIB
PO BOX 111
BIG SANDY TX 75755

50
49140
0 787445 1

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

IT'S TIME TO OPEN UP THE INFORMATION SUPERHIGHWAY

- Access 2000
- Adelphia Communications Corp.
- AirTouch Communications
- Alliance for Competitive Communications
- American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC)
- Ameritech
- Bell Atlantic
- BellSouth
- Booth American Co.
- Bresnan Communications Co.
- Cablevision Industries
- Cablevision Systems Corp.
- CBS
- Citizens for a Sound Economy
- Comcast Corporation
- Cox Enterprises Inc.
- Fox
- GTE
- Hearing Society for the Bay Area, Inc.
- Insight Communications
- InterMedia Partners
- Latin American Women and Supporters
- Lenfest Group
- Marcus Cable
- Minnesota Association of Deaf Citizens, Inc.
- National Association of Broadcasters
- National Association of Commissions for Women

AFTER MORE THAN 60 YEARS, IT'S TIME TO OVERHAUL FEDERAL TELECOMMUNICATIONS LAW.

HOW? FIRST AND FOREMOST, BY OPENING ALL MARKETS TO COMPETITION.

WHY? BECAUSE COMPETITION WILL GIVE CONSUMERS MORE CHOICES, BETTER SERVICES AND LOWER PRICES.

WE BELIEVE IT'S TIME FOR CONGRESS TO OPEN UP THE INFORMATION SUPERHIGHWAY – AND PASS TELECOMMUNICATIONS REFORM NOW!

- National Association of Minority Automobile Dealers
- National Association of the Deaf
- National Cable Television Association
- National Council of Senior Citizens
- National Council of Silver Haired Legislators
- National Hispanic Council on Aging
- National Latino Telecommunications Task Force
- National Newspaper Association
- NBC
- Newspaper Association of America
- Northern California (NORCAL) Center on Deafness, Inc.
- NYNEX
- Pacific Telesis Group
- SBC Communications Inc.
- Self Help for Hard of Hearing People, Inc.
- Small Business Survival Committee
- Tele-Communications, Inc.
- Telecommunications for the Deaf, Inc.
- The Caucus of Producers, Writers and Directors
- The National Trust for the Development of African-American Men
- The Seniors Coalition
- Time Warner Inc.
- Triax Communications Corp.
- Turner Broadcasting Systems, Inc.
- U.S. Cable Corp.
- U S WEST
- United Homeowners Association
- United States Telephone Association
- World Institute on Disability

COALITION FOR COMMUNICATIONS REFORM NOW!

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE NEW REPUBLIC

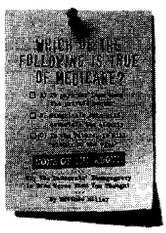
A Weekly Journal of Opinion

AMBASSADOR UNIVERSITY
LIBRARY

DECEMBER 11, 1995

FOUNDED 1914
WASHINGTON, D.C.
ISSUE 4,221

PO Box 111
Big Sandy, TX 75755



Cover by Eric Baker for THE NEW REPUBLIC. Article on page 20.

4 **CORRESPONDENCE** Livingston v. Shalit, England v. Sullivan, &c.

6 **JEFFREY ROSEN** TRB: BIG CHURCH Bob Dole's church-state hypocrisy.

7 **THE EDITORS** PLEASE GROW UP Gingrich isn't a crybaby. The voters are.

8 **NOTEBOOK** The pope's female problem, the GOP's phony numbers, &c.

9 **HANNA ROSIN** ON THE HILL: FRIENDS The GOP's secret Hollywood love-in.

10 **CHARLES LANE** BUCHAREST POSTCARD: THE UNDEAD Democracy v. Ceaustalgia.

12 **MICHAEL LIND** WRIGHT'S WRONG A defense of liberal nationalism.

13 **MASHA GESSEN** MOSCOW POSTCARD: REDS UNDER LEBED Meet Russia's new savior.

15 **JOHN B. JUDIS** CAMP BOB The Florida straw poll and the decline of the GOP.

17 **ANNE APPLEBAUM** EX-COMS Poland's election confirms a trend. The communists are back. And they're accelerating Eastern Europe's drive toward capitalism.

20 **MATTHEW MILLER** THE MEDICARE BOOM Guess what? On current trends, even with Newt's cuts, Medicare looks set to be a paradise for doctors and patients compared with the private sector.

24 **STANLEY KAUFFMANN** ON FILMS: A PREDICAMENT The Holocaust on film.

26 **JED PERL** ON ART: THE THIRD DEGREE Brancusi's arresting forms.

30 **MICHAEL LEVENSON** THE UNQUIET ENGLISHMAN *Graham Greene: The Enemy Within* by Michael Shelden; *The Life of Graham Greene Volume II: 1939-1954* by Norman Sherry

35 **EUGENE D. GENOVESE** CAPTAIN KIRK *The Sword of Imagination* by Russell Kirk

39 **PAUL ELIE** SMELLS AND BELLS *The Sign of the Cross* by Colm Tóibín

40 **JOSEPH BRODSKY** POEM *In Memory of Clifford Brown*

42 **MATTHEW COOPER** WASHINGTON DIARIST: SAAB STORY

Editor-in-Chief and Chairman
MARTIN PERETZ

Editor
ANDREW SULLIVAN
Literary Editor
LEON WIESELTIER
Executive Editor
MARGARET TALBOT
Senior Editors
MATTHEW COOPER, ANN HULBERT, JOHN B. JUDIS, MICHAEL KINSLEY, CHARLES LANE, MICHAEL LEWIS, MICHAEL LIND, JAMES WOOD, ROBERT WRIGHT
Managing Editor
PETER BEINART
Legal Affairs
JEFFREY ROSEN
Economics
MATTHEW MILLER
Films
STANLEY KAUFFMANN
Theater
ROBERT BRUSTEIN
Poetry
MARK STRAND
Dance
MINDY ALOFF
Photography
LUC SANTE
Art
JED PERL
New Republic Books (Basic Books)
PAUL GOLOB
Contributing Editors
ELIOT A. COHEN, STANLEY CROUCH, JACOB HEILBRUNN, ANNA HUSARSKA, MICKEY KAUS, CHARLES KRAUTHAMMER, VINT LAWRENCE, DOUGLAS G. McGRATH, LOUIS MENAND, ROGER ROSENBLATT, MAGGIE SCARF, ROBERT SHAPIRO, RONALD STEEL, E. V. THAW, TOM TOLES, TATYANA TOLSTAYA, MICHAEL WALZER, JACOB WEISBERG, SEAN WILENTZ, ALAN WOLFE, C. VANN WOODWARD
Associate Editors
NADER MOUSAVIZADEH, HANNA ROSIN, RUTH SHALIT
Design Consultant
ERIC BAKER
Editorial-Corporate Coordinator
LAURA E. OBOLENSKY
Production Director
BRUCE STEINKE
Production Manager
HENRY RIGGS
Assistant Editors
DEBRA DUROCHER, JENNIFER BRADLEY
Literary Assistant
MELANIE REHAK
Reporter-Researchers
JONATHAN CHAIT, MICHAEL CROWLEY, STEPHEN GLASS, ELISSA SILVERMAN

President and Publisher
JOAN M. STAPLETON
Vice President
JAMES J. McCABE
Associate Publisher-Circulation
PEGGY JARVIS FERRIN
Associate Publisher-Advertising
JENNIFER BARRETT
Controller
CHRISTINA R. BONIFER
Circulation Manager
CECELIA M. STEPHENS
Marketing Manager
SHABNAM K. SHARMA
Advertising Manager
ASHLEY H. COOPER
Accounting Assistants
JACQUELYN M. McCULLOUGH
JEANNINE DINGMAN
Advertising Assistant
CLAIRE P. STERN
Circulation Assistant
CAROLYN BERRY
Back Issues and Reception
MARGO JOHNSON

THE NEW REPUBLIC, Vol. 213, Number 24, Issue 4,221, December 11, 1995. (Printed in the U.S. on November 21, 1995.) Published weekly (except for combined issues dated Jan. 9 & 16, July 17 & 24, Aug. 21 & 28, and Sept. 18 & 25, 1995) at 1220 19th Street, NW, Washington, DC 20036. Telephone (202) 331-7494. The New Republic Advertising Sales Office (212) 702-4882. Yearly subscriptions, $69.97; foreign, $99.97; Canada, $84.97. Back issues, $3.50 (includes postage & handling). © 1995 by The New Republic, Inc. (ISSN 0028-6583). Second-class postage paid at Washington, DC, and additional mailing offices. Indexed in Readers' Guide, Media Review Digest. Microform, CD-ROM, issue and article copies are available through University Microfilms Intnl., 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106. Telephone 1-800-521-0600. Internet mail address: tnr@aol.com Member, Audit Bureau of Circulations. Unsolicited manuscripts can be returned only if accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope. Subscribers: Please send all remittances, changes of address, and subscription inquiries to Subscription Service Dept., The New Republic, P.O. Box 602, Mount Morris, IL 61054. For subscription problems call 800-827-1289.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

CORRESPONDENCE

Stitch in time

To the editors:

Anna Husarska's "sounder analysis," of the baseball manufacturing situation in Haiti ("Stitched Up," November 13) simply parroted the justifications of every sweatshop owner who ever lived. Rather than address the unwillingness of baseball manufacturers to share profits more equitably with their labor force, Husarska directed her scorn at the "do-gooders" whose efforts for improved working conditions resulted in the large companies moving to Costa Rica and China and abandoning their Haitian work force. By way of analogy, abusive parents may rightly be credited for not throwing their child into the streets, but this does not absolve them of their guilt for making the child's life miserable. While the issue of unjust labor treatment versus no labor at all is not a simple one, Husarska wrongly points the finger of blame at those who sought to improve the lives of Haitian workers rather than at appeals to "competitiveness" by the companies themselves which are largely based upon deeply ingrained and culturally conditioned assumptions of the corporate world.

CRAIG R. PRENTISS
Kansas City, Missouri

Pensions unplanned

To the editors:

Jonathan Chait's article, "Geezer Teaser," in the November 13 issue fell short of your normal high standards. The reason may well be that the author unwittingly accepted some of the disinformation being put out by a relatively obscure U.S. government agency, the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation (PBGC).

The proposal in the House reconciliation bill to allow corporations with certain overfunded pension plans under strict rules to transfer some of the excess funds is not a raid on "workers' hard-earned pensions." This proposal creates no realistic threat to worker pensions. The proposal has a number of benefits, including allowing the funds to be put to their most productive use and encouraging employers to continue defined benefit plans.

Chait does not understand the minimum level of funding or cushion required before any surplus assets can be transferred. Chait's confusion on this issue is understandable. The PBGC put out a study of the House provision that contained the same error. The cushion is not just 125 percent of current obligations. It is the *greater* of 125 percent of current liability or the plan's full funding limit. (The full funding limit is a fund's "accrued liability," which includes projected future employment and salary increases, capped at 150 percent of current liability.)

Chait cites old studies by the General Accounting Office that show companies can manipulate assumptions to make pensions appear overfunded. These studies have been overtaken by events because the Congress, with the support of the administration, has tightened the procedures. Now pension fund managers must use demographic and interest assumptions within ranges specified in law.

Chait is concerned that if the stock market drops pension funds will suddenly become underfunded. Presumably, his concern reflects the PBGC estimate that if the interest rate fell one percentage point and the value of pension assets fell 10 percent, a plan funded at 125 percent of liabilities would suddenly become underfunded. The PBGC's assumption of a decrease in interest rates accompanied by a decline in financial asset market values has not occurred in the U.S. economy in the past seventy years and is highly unlikely to ever happen in the future. The evidence overwhelmingly concludes the opposite: a decline in interest rates is usually accompanied by an increase in market values.

In addition, a respected actuarial firm, Watson Wyatt Worldwide examined a sample of 418 plans (the PBGC looked at ten), 139 of which were fully funded or overfunded. Of these 139 plans, fewer than 30 percent would be eligible to transfer assets down to 125 percent of current liability. And even if each of the eligible plans took a transfer, they each would still hold assets equal to at least 111 percent of that plan's full funding limit. The potential risk that after a transfer any plan's assets will later fall below current liability is very small (less than 5 percent).

LETITIA CHAMBERS
Washington, D.C.

Fresh meet

To the editors:

Ruth Shalit's recent article "Freshfellas" (November 13) is certainly entertaining, but I hope you don't expect any awards for her accuracy. First, nothing whatsoever happened which bears any resemblance to a purported incident she describes between me and Representa-

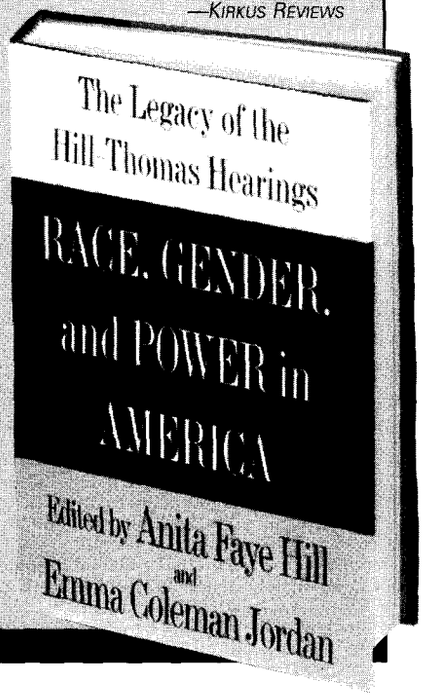
"The right wing got its chance with David Brock's *The Real Anita Hill.* **Now come Hill and ten intellectual allies to consider the legacy of her celebrated case....** Adds urgency to the continued discussion of sexual and racial inequality in America."
—KIRKUS REVIEWS

"Ms. Hill's own essay... is required reading for those interested in this historic confrontation."
—NEIL A. LEWIS,
THE NEW YORK TIMES BOOK REVIEW

Contributors such as Eleanor Holmes Norton, Anna Deveare Smith, Orlando Patterson, A. Leon Higginbotham, Jr., Charles J. Ogletree, Adele Logan Alexander, and Susan Deller Ross explore the volatile politics of race and gender.

$25.00, 302 pp.

At better bookstores.
Or call 1-800-451-7556 (M-F, 9-5 EST)
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS


The Legacy of the Hill-Thomas Hearings
RACE, GENDER, and POWER in AMERICA
Edited by Anita Faye Hill and Emma Coleman Jordan

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tive David McIntosh. The truth is that from the very beginning I have supported the Istook-McIntosh language restricting taxpayer-funded lobbying, and never even had reason to "erupt" at McIntosh. The tale is blatantly untrue.

Similarly, I never threatened Representative Tom Coburn with repercussions for his vote against the Defense appropriations bill (although I did question his vote after going to great lengths to help him on an earlier issue).

Shalit also indulges flights of fancy when she refers to Representative Mark Neumann and freshmen who "extorted from their Speaker a promise that Neumann would be elevated to the prestigious House Budget Committee." The Budget assignment was *my* idea. The fact that Shalit never requested an interview with me on any of these topics makes me wonder whither have gone basic journalistic ethics, not to mention common sense.

ROBERT L. LIVINGSTON
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C.

Ruth Shalit replies:

It's a little odd that Representative Livingston castigates me for not calling him. On October 13, I called his office to request an interview for my story. I was turned down on the grounds that Livingston wanted to put the Neumann matter "behind him."

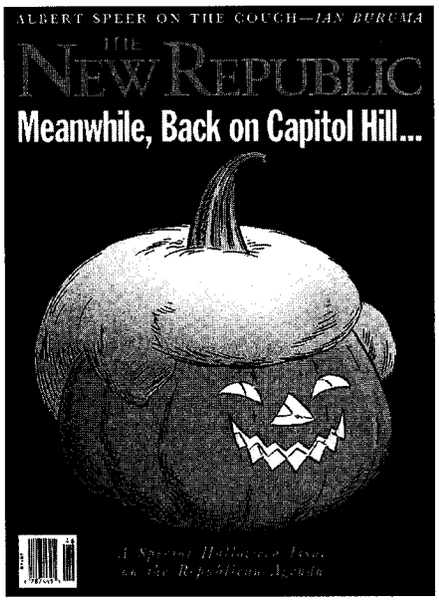
Mr. Livingston writes that "from the beginning," he welcomed the addition of the Istook-McIntosh language to his appropriations bill. Really? On August 13, *The Washington Post* described Mr. Livingston's "volcanic explosion" after House Republicans tried to attach the Istook-McIntosh provisions onto his appropriations bill. "I just blew my top," Mr. Livingston told the *Post*. "I said, 'Look, you guys are piling a lot of crap on my bill!' " My account of Livingston's subsequent conversation with David McIntosh was based on reliable sources, and I stand by it entirely. And the details of Livingston's scuffle with Representative Mark Neumann—as well as Neumann's subsequent promotion to the Budget Committee—have been widely reported elsewhere. As Representative Mark Souder told me, the compromise was accepted only after the Speaker intervened to quell a furious protest from the freshmen.

Bill's bill

To the editors:

In "AmeriCorpse," (November 13) Steven Waldman argues hopefully that "Republicans will realize ... that AmeriCorps was the solution to their dilemma of how to dismantle the welfare state without seeming cruel." Waldman could hardly be further from the truth.

Yes, Republicans could score some short-lived political "compassion" points by not going after a program that claims to help idealistic young folks pay for college. But by opposing AmeriCorps, conservatives make a more enduring, albeit more difficult, ideological point. AmeriCorps is a Great Society-style government program trying to pass as a means to reinvigorate citizenship and heal communities. In fact, the defining feature of the program—using federal resources to promote volunteerism—directly contradicts the real source of citizen empowerment: re-limiting government and returning its resources and authority directly to communities.



Waldman claims that "most AmeriCorps money goes to efficient nonprofit organizations like the Red Cross or Boys Club." What he doesn't mention is that a variety of political advocacy groups received funding, too, including ACORN (the Association of Community Organizers for Reform Now) and the National Council of LaRaza. Moreover, in 1994-95, fully one-fourth of AmeriCorps' paid volunteers worked in either city, state or federal agencies.

Waldman's argument that "the GOP has also practiced gross statistics-abuse in order to portray AmeriCorps, inaccurately, as a boondoggle" comes right off the talking points of the spinmeisters at the Corporation for National Service (CNS). It's true that the CNS did not spend more than the $17,600 per volunteer that the federal appropriation for AmeriCorps permits. However, many AmeriCorps programs—particularly those where "volunteers" have been placed in federal agencies—are far more costly to the taxpayers. The General Accounting Office estimated that each of the AmeriCorps "volunteers" in the federal bureaucracy costs an average of $31,017. And as for AmeriCorps' much-hyped ability to leverage matching funds from the private sector, the same GAO report indicated that 88 percent of AmeriCorps' funding came directly from taxpayers at the federal, state and local levels.

In short, AmeriCorps has proven to be precisely the kind of big-government boondoggle that its critics had projected. Waldman had hoped that conservatives would swallow hard and accept AmeriCorps as the political antidote to their efforts to dismantle the welfare state. Instead, they've recognized the program for what it is: an obstacle to such reform. But in concluding his piece, at least he got one thing right: "And we wonder why people are cynical about politics."

JOHN P. WALTERS
Washington, D.C.

Having to

To the editors:

I suppose I should be flattered that Andrew Sullivan ("Do I Have To?" November 20) singles me out as a "far-gone" English reactionary. If he knew me, he would know that he is mistaken. On the one hand, I am a cynical rather than a reactionary Conservative. On the other hand, I believe it to be the business of Conservative intellectuals to give intellectual expression to that decent, undogmatic, respectable and, on the whole, suburban conservatism which has been one of the dominant forces in English political life in the last eighty years; and I approved of Mrs. Thatcher, not because of the economic dogmatism of some of her followers, but because she was particularly good at embodying its assumptions.

These assumptions vary from time to time. At present they include the ideas that taxation should be reduced, European integration resisted and something done about crime. This will seem reactionary only to minds that have been brainwashed into liberal imbecility.

Whether a hardening toward Europe, a giveaway budget and yet another crackdown on crime will enable the Conservative Party to recover itself before the next general election is uncertain, since general elections are affected by trust, confidence and personality. What is certain is that, along with a good deal of cynicism about politicians, the opinions that Sullivan classes as "reactionary" are the normal opinions of large numbers of English electors.

MAURICE COWLING
Garden City, New York

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

TRB®

FROM WASHINGTON

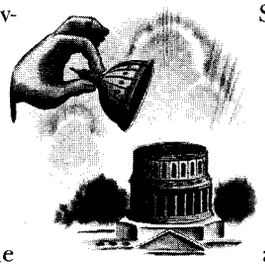
Big church

A few weeks ago, Bob Dole struck a fearless blow for the separation of church and state. He denounced the Department of Housing and Urban Development for using federal funds to hire the Nation of Islam Security Agency to patrol public housing projects in Baltimore. Dole was especially concerned that the Nation of Islam might be violating federal anti-discrimination laws by hiring only African Americans; he also worried that federal taxes were being used to subsidize religious proselytizing. Stung by Dole's criticisms, HUD canceled the contract on November 9.

But Dole's posturing as a defender of Jeffersonian ideals was absurd. His own welfare reform bill would authorize churches to administer federal welfare programs on a grand scale—and would exempt them from anti-discrimination laws in the process. A little-noticed amendment proposed by Senator John Ashcroft of Missouri, and backed by Dole, would prohibit states from discriminating against "religious organizations" if they decide to contract out certain welfare programs to private charities. In other words, states would be free to delegate programs like child care, pregnancy prevention or even cash assistance to the Nation of Islam, which could require the needy to listen to uplifting numerological sermons while cheerfully discriminating against Jewish employees.

If Dole and Ashcroft really cared about religious neutrality, they could have drafted a sane welfare bill while avoiding the Dickensian tangle of constitutional challenges that this scheme is sure to provoke. The basic impulse behind the bill makes sense: in an age where social services are being massively privatized, religiously affiliated charities *should* be tapped to deliver social services to the poor, since they do it better than almost anyone else. New York state, for example, relies heavily on Catholic and Jewish charities to provide publicly funded foster care. And, as Sallie Tisdale has argued in these pages, the Salvation Army is a model of cost efficiency, spending eighty-seven cents of every donated dollar on its service programs. (See "Good Soldiers," TNR, January 3, 1994.) But because the Salvation Army balks at the idea of separating its religious mission from its charity work, as federal law requires, it has been increasingly reluctant to accept federal funds, which now comprise less than 1 percent of its budget.

Senator Ashcroft, however, wants to solve that problem by allowing churches to administer public welfare programs in an openly sectarian way. His tough-love model evokes the welfare program in *Time Bandits*, where John Cleese as Robin Hood hands out coins to a line of dottering old ladies and then, to emphasize the value of work, has his merry men hit them in the stomach. The bill stresses that a church receiving public funds can't be forced to "remove religious art, icons, scripture, or other symbols" while handing out federal money. Direct grants (as opposed to vouchers) can't be used for religious education or proselytizing, but the bill doesn't say explicitly that benefits have to be distributed in a secular manner. If a recipient objects to the religious character of a welfare program, the state has to set up an alternative.



The relevant Supreme Court decisions are a little opaque—they hinge, as usual, on the conflicted impulses of Sandra Day O'Connor—but five justices seem to agree that if religious charities want to administer public welfare programs, they have to do so in a secular way. O'Connor emphasized in the 1988 *Bowen* case that "any use of public funds to promote religious doctrine violates the Establishment Clause." And in *Bowen*, the Court held that religiously affiliated charities can receive government grants to advocate chastity, but "pervasively sectarian" institutions, such as parochial schools, *can't* be directly funded, because of the fear that public funds will be used to advance religion.

The employment discrimination provisions of the bill are also shaky. Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the federal anti-discrimination law, contains an exemption for religious organizations; but a Mississippi judge held in January 1989 that exemption doesn't apply when a religious group is administering public funds; therefore, he held, the Salvation Army couldn't fire an employee in its federally funded domestic-violence shelter after learning she was a witch. Senator Ashcroft was furious when he heard about the case. In a meeting with Julie Segal of Americans United for Separation of Church and State, one of his staffers objected to the idea that "with government sheckles come governmental shackles." Accordingly, the Ashcroft amendment says that the religious exemption from Title VII still holds even where public funds are involved.

Unfortunately, the constitutional questions weren't aired in Congress. That's because Ashcroft has quietly decided to tack his amendment onto a slew of social service reform bills—including the recent substance abuse bill—without public hearings or debate. So the courts will have the final say. Rather than waiting for Justice O'Connor to make up her mind, Representative Henry Hyde took matters into his own hands last week by introducing the Religious Equality Amendment to the Constitution: "Neither the United States nor any State shall deny benefits to or otherwise discriminate against any private person or group on account of religious expression, belief, or identity." But the Hyde Amendment would also permit direct government funding of religious schools and, therefore, would violate a presumption against direct taxation for the benefit of religion that stretches back to the nineteenth century.

Constitutional worries aside, the Ashcroft-Dole scheme seems like bad policy for churches; it tempts them to become agents of the welfare state in ways that can only compromise their religious autonomy. Unlike Newt Gingrich's libertarian guru, Marvin Olasky, who wants to dismantle the welfare state entirely so that churches can step voluntarily into the breach, the Dole bill is a statist nightmare that would open up church coffers to federal audits if they fail to segregate public and private funds.

Maybe these nightmare scenarios won't materialize; maybe all the churches deputized under the Ashcroft scheme will conduct themselves like those mild-mannered curates in Victorian novels who dispense tea and sympathy to the deserving poor without alarming them by mentioning the Divine. In that case the bill might pass constitutional muster. But the dangers of the Ashcroft scheme could have been avoided. All Dole had to do was to require churches to set up non-sectarian affiliates as a condition of receiving public funds and to prohibit them from proselytizing, or engaging in religious discrimination, while performing state functions. Don't the Grand Rebbe and Louis Farrakhan deserve to be held to the same standards?

JEFFREY ROSEN

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE NEW REPUBLIC

DECEMBER 11, 1995

PLEASE GROW UP

"I'd like to throw out Gingrich," one randomly selected citizen, Miriam Elterman, told *The Christian Science Monitor*. "Missing a deadline like this ... I'd like to get rid of all of them and start fresh." "It's stupid," concurred one Judy Skinner. "This is what we are paying them for. They have millions of people depending on them, and they are blowing it." "Newt and Bob should go home and stay there," Bob MacMahon complained to *The Washington Post*. "Politics have gotten ridiculous."

Grow up. The only people being fundamentally irresponsible in the recent—and continuing—budget battle are the American people. They are, to borrow a phrase from our colleague Michael Kinsley, big babies. A year ago, in a realigning election, voters ushered in a Republican Congress that had pledged, in complete candor, to balance the federal budget. In the days before that election, voters backed Republicans over Democrats by a 2.8 percent margin. Then the Republicans made a fatal error: they tried to deliver on their promise. The result is that in the last few months the party positions have been completely reversed. The Democrats now lead by 2.4 percent.

Worse, in the latest *Washington Post*/ABC News poll, they blame the recent government shutdown almost entirely on the GOP; and back president Clinton's budget position over Newt Gingrich's, 56 to 36 percent. By a 2-1 ratio in the same poll, voters think the GOP budget is too tough on domestic programs, especially Medicare. The benign explanation for this is that the mix in the GOP budget is not the right one, a view we share. As we have argued in this space, we'd rather scrap the tax cuts, protect EITC, pass real welfare reform with adequate funding for real jobs, dig into corporate welfare and, if anything, cut more deeply into Medicare. But the most persuasive explanation for the current public hostility to the Congress is, we fear, not this at all. It's an explanation that has held up grandly for the last fifteen years: Americans want a balanced budget, lower taxes *and* higher government spending. The first group of politicians since Walter Mondale to come close to saying that's a pipe dream are being dutifully punished. And the real wails go up when it looks like middle-class entitlements are being tampered with. Newt Gingrich isn't the real crybaby in all this. The voters are.

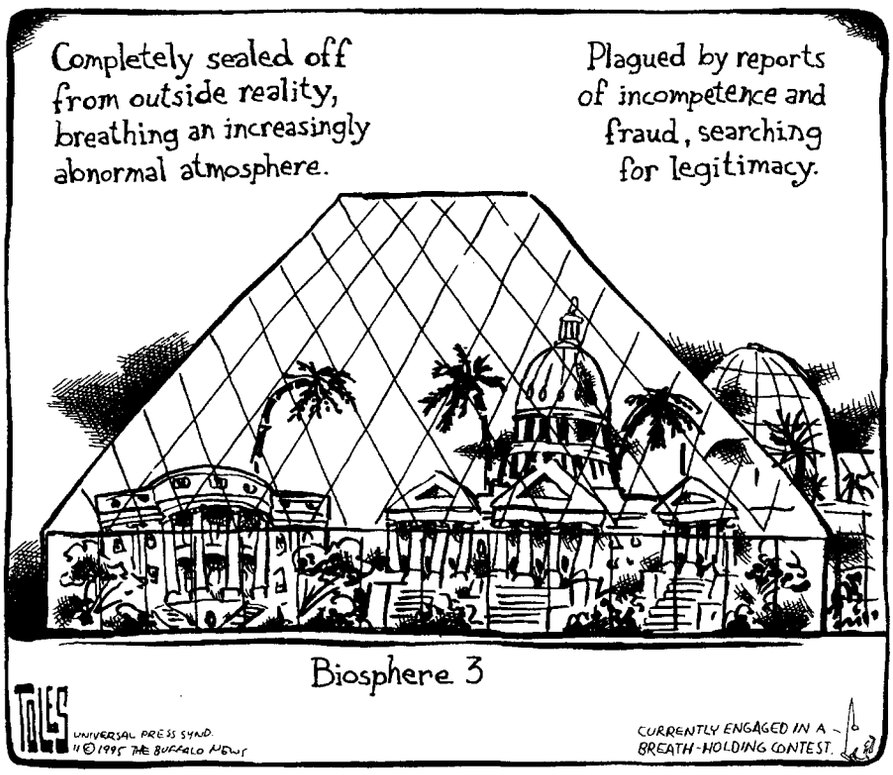
As Matthew Miller points out elsewhere in this issue, the GOP's proposed reductions in the growth of Medicare spending are, if anything, the least that could be done (see "The Medicare Boom," page 20). Compared to the dramatic reductions in health care costs that the market is inducing in the private sector, Medicare is set on a Soviet-style, market-insulated, relentlessly upward trajectory. If nothing is done soon, it will bankrupt this generation and the next. President Clinton, in those rare moments when his fiscal prudence wins out over his political opportunism, has conceded as much. Speaker Gingrich, for all his failings, is the first American politician actually to confront the public with the reality. For that, he gets an approval rating of 27 percent.

The deal that the president has struck with the Congress is, in our view, a workable one. In many ways, a path to balance the budget in seven years with Clinton's domestic priorities is the best of both worlds: we could reverse our financial irresponsibility without wrecking decent government programs. The shutdown, indeed, was not a disaster. It was a legitimate function of the separation of powers over a critical issue: whether this country is going to start to control its spiraling debt or not. Eventually, the American people will have to quit whining and make up their minds. We're still waiting. •

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

NOTEBOOK

SIC TRANSIT: Delegates to the New Jersey League of Municipalities' annual conference attended a workshop on the "dollars and sense of humor in municipal government".... Scientists at the University of Massachusetts claim to have invented a candy bar that lowers cholesterol.... California Democratic Party Chairman Bill Press and Democratic congressional candidate Jerry Estruth offered to pay for a first-class plane ticket for House Speaker Newt Gingrich if he promised to go to California to campaign for Republican candidates.... The Democratic National Committee decided to reimburse the Walt Disney Company for the *Beauty and the Beast* costumes that Vice President Gore and his wife wore for Halloween.... San Francisco Mayor Frank Jordan apologized for a campaign stunt in which he stood naked in a shower with two local disc jockeys.... Seeking to enhance its poor human rights image, the Liberian Peace Council, a rebel faction in the West African country, shot seven members accused of abusing civilians.


Completely sealed off from outside reality, breathing an increasingly abnormal atmosphere.
Plagued by reports of incompetence and fraud, searching for legitimacy.
Biosphere 3
TOLES
UNIVERSAL PRESS SYND.
©1995 THE BUFFALO NEWS
CURRENTLY ENGAGED IN A BREATH-HOLDING CONTEST.

FALLIBLE: If you're lucky enough to be made a Freeman of the city of London, you have the right, which goes back to the Middle Ages, to drive a flock of sheep across Waterloo Bridge. Such authority, in practice, is a little awkward for the city and rarely exercised. The doctrine of papal infallibility is awkward in similar ways for the Catholic Church, which partly explains why it has been invoked only twice since its formal establishment in the late nineteenth century. It is easier to leave the flock unmolested in its pasture. So quite a stir was unleashed last week when the Vatican announced that the Church's ban on the ordination of women is "infallible"—that is, irrevocable and without error. Some observers think the pope was dissuaded from invoking papal infallibility in his 1994 declaration on this issue, which asserted that "the Church has no authority whatsoever to confer priestly ordination on women...." Last week's ruling came not from the pope himself (though he approved it) but from the Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, which oversees Church teaching. It's further evidence of CDF head Joseph Ratzinger's increasingly panicked assertions of unanswerable power; and, ironically, debases the very currency of infallibility he wishes to uphold. Papal infallibility has been used rarely over the centuries—mainly to repudiate rival doctrines such as Lutheranism and Jansenism. It was given formal body in 1870, as Italian troops marched on Rome, poised to divest the pope of his temporal power. Papal infallibility, at least in part, was a neat spiritual compensation for the loss of worldly clout. Cardinal Newman commended the doctrine as "a supply for a need, [which] does not go beyond that need. Its object is ... not to enfeeble the freedom or vigour of human thought in religious speculation, but to resist and control its extravagance." But even he, no doctrinal wet, was troubled by its use to define issues of religious practice beyond doctrine, which is what the ordination of women clearly is. The arguments against it are so weak and so insulting to half the human race that it's no surprise they can only be enforced by fiat. Moreover, the way in which the doctrine has been laid down only adds another layer of dispute: namely, can there be such a thing as an error-free human, even one who is God's chief representative on earth? It's worth noting that, although the pope has declared that the Church has "no authority" to ordain women, that same Church has reserved for itself the authority to lay down this non-authority infallibly...

NUMEROLOGY: The White House, using figures from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), projects that the economy will grow at a rate of 2.5 percent per year. Newt Gingrich calls this "phony," relying on a 2.3 percent estimate from the "nonpartisan" Congressional Budget Office (CBO). Republicans, and edi-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

torial writers, have elevated this murky dispute into an Armageddon between budgetary truth and deceit. It's unclear why OMB, whose director is appointed by the president, is biased while the CBO, whose director is appointed by Congress, is a bastion of objectivity. Before she became a political virgin, CBO Director June O'Neill wrote partisan screeds attacking the Clinton health plan on behalf of interested businesses. The question of 2.3 vs. 2.5 percent growth, far from being a test of budget honesty, is legitimately debatable. And the Republicans are no courageous budget purists themselves. Phony CBO-based deficit gimmicks abound in the GOP budget. The CBO projects that switching the college loan program from direct to guaranteed lending will produce $1.6 billion in savings. In fact, as Steve Waldman pointed out in these pages several weeks ago (see "AmeriCorpse," November 13) it is actually likely to *cost* money. The CBO also says that allowing oil drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge will bring in $1.3 billion, a figure probably inflated tenfold. Why has the GOP manufactured such dubious figures? To meet the deficit-reduction numbers mandated by their "tough" and "honest" 2.3 percent growth estimate. The revolution gallops on.

WELCOME MATT II: With this issue and cover story, TNR welcomes Matthew Miller, a former OMB staffer in the Clinton administration, as our economics editor. •

ON THE HILL

FRIENDS

By Hanna Rosin

Remember that stormy May day in L.A. when Bob Dole came to wrestle the demons of Hollywood? "I would like to ask the executives of Time Warner a question," he thundered, stunning his audience. "You have sold your souls, but must you debase our nation and threaten our children as well?" To bring his point home, Dole mailed out thousands of "Petitions For Our Children," pledging America's families "to shame those who profit from violence and sex." Parents are supposed to sign the petition and mail it back with a picture of their children or grandchildren. As the images of smiling cherubs pour in, Dole will mail them in bulk to depraved producers, so they can "look at the faces—into the eyes."

With his mailbox flooding over, Time Warner Chairman Gerald Levin might be tempted to curse Bob Dole. But as Levin well knows, there's another side to Dole, a much friendlier side. After all, it was Dole who drafted a telecom bill tailor-made for Time Warner: it dismantles cable regulations, permits a single broadcaster to own a huge chunk of the market and gives away $40 billion worth of new airwaves, among other treats. Parents fretting about prime-time sex will have to hold their tongues: Dole doubled the time between license reviews to ten years and tried desperately to quash the v-chip (he failed). Dole even invited Levin and friends for a celebration of this legislative milestone, on November 20, at the Crystal Ballroom of the Beverly Hills Hotel. For $1,000 a plate.

Call it the Reverend Dimmesdale strategy (in honor of the new Demi Moore movie): shame the networks in public, then stroke them in private. "The Republicans are out there rattling cages and banging on drums," says House Democrat Nita Lowey. "But behind the scenes, it's all backslapping and nudge nudge, wink wink."

For the party of family values, the strategy takes an especially scary turn at children's programming. In return for free access to the airwaves, networks are required to serve the public interest, by showing news, for example. In 1990, Congress added educational children's shows to the category of public interest programming and let the networks meet the standard voluntarily.

By any measure, they flunked. A National Association of Broadcasters study boasts that each network showed over three hours a week, although they won't name the shows. But an independent evaluation, released by U.C.-Santa Barbara researcher Dale Kunkel in October, does it for them. On the list of educational kids shows were: "America's Funniest Home Videos," "Biker Mice from Mars," "Mighty Morphin Power Rangers," "X-Men" and "Yogi Bear." "The program ... does teach certain moral and ethical values," programmers at Pennsylvania's WGCB explained about "Yogi Bear," "such as not to do stupid things or you will have trouble; don't take what doesn't belong to you or be prepared to face the music."

But when FCC Chairman Reed Hundt tried to clamp down on the networks, the God-fearing party crucified him. Jack Fields, chairman of the House Telecommunications Subcommittee, who once said he welcomes more children's programming, changed his tune. He hollered in a speech to broadcasters that he would "have a war" with Hundt, then drew up the battle plan. Along with Larry Pressler, chairman of the Senate Commerce Committee, Fields hatched an elaborate conspiracy: when Westinghouse, whose bid to buy CBS was pending FCC approval, agreed to show three hours of children's programming, Fields cried blackmail. "I am concerned that FCC review ... not become an opportunity for legalized extortion," he blustered in a letter and ordered the oversight committee to launch an investigation into Hundt.

Admittedly, both Fields and Pressler have a lot at stake.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Since November 1993, Fields has raised $290,000 from broadcast PACs, the largest sum the industry gave to any single recipient. The silver medal goes to Pressler, who has bankrolled in six months what took his jealous colleagues years to accumulate. "Don't get hooked on the opium of state money," the South Dakota senator once warned his state colleagues. But that was before he became Commerce Committee chair. This year, he hit the Hollywood scene like an earthquake. He's held at least three fund-raisers in L.A. in six months, and is planning one for December 3, hosted by Ticketmaster titan Fred Rosen, according to an invited L.A. lobbyist. Ted Turner, who held a $1,000-a-plate dinner at Paramount Studios in April, told guests on the invitation to "feel free to bring the check." Rupert Murdoch hosted dinner at the 21 Club in June; and John Kluge had a feast at his home. All this steak and wine has netted Pressler a chunky $149,000, in PAC money, plus about the same in individual donations—higher than any committee chair. "So many parties, so little time," jokes a Republican Senate aide.

We may have become inured to the spectacle of committee chairs cadging cash from those they are supposed to regulate, but this crew seems to be going at it with unusual fervor. "This is definitely not business as usual," says Nicholas Allard, a telecommunications lawyer with Latham & Watkins. "I hear people saying they've never seen anything like it. The gravy train is already full, and they want it overflowing."

Not one to miss a party, Newt Gingrich has lately been muscling in on the scene. He dressed up Sonny Bono as chairman of an Entertainment Task Force and, in September, shipped the former pop star to the Beverly Wilshire for a meeting with his old friends. A few of the less glamorous joined him, including House leaders Tom DeLay and David Dreier, and freshmen Mark Foley and Ken Calvert. Originally planned as a public hearing on the sins of Hollywood, the meeting ended up as a private love-in. "I was really worried," recalls one representative of a major studio. "We expected a sermon on sex and violence. Instead, they were, uh, how shall I put it? Frank. They went to great pains to distance themselves from the Dole speech. They said while they may have to speak out a lot and use their positions as a bully pulpit, they won't actually *do* anything."

All of Hollywood was tickled pink. "The Sonny Bono event was a watershed," gushes David Horowitz, founder of the Wednesday Morning Club, a support group for Republicans in Hollywood. "For the first time, conservatives are not lobbing shells at Hollywood. They came to open the dialogue, to say, 'We are here not as adversaries, but as good friends.' " Swoons another participant. "It was excellent. I can't say more. I never knew I could *like* Republicans."

And what has happened to the crusade for family television? Well, it's just being interpreted more, shall we say, expansively. In describing his vision for his party's ideal future, freshman Mark Foley stumbled on a new GOP-friendly pilot idea: "Tonya Harding was booed off the stage by her contemporaries. They said, 'You are a vile woman and we don't think your music is good.' That's the kind of change we need in America." Sounds like a good dose of shame, administered by the chorus of an afternoon talk show. Bill Bennett was wrong. What America needs is more Rikki Lake. •

BUCHAREST POSTCARD

THE UNDEAD

By Charles Lane

BUCHAREST

In a corner of the Ghencea Cemetery, fresh carnations lie scattered on a mound of moist brown soil. No headstone or monument marks the grave—only a rough wooden cross emblazoned with the hand-written words "The Unknown!" On closer inspection, this exclamation turns out to be ironic. Attached to the cross is a yellowed photograph of a wavy-haired man in a cloth overcoat, shaking hands with factory workers. Another sign identifies him as "the greatest hero of the Romanian nation." There is, indeed, nothing unknown about Nicolae Ceauşescu, the Communist despot who ran Romania for a quarter century until his execution during the December 1989 revolution.

I was almost prepared to accept the flower-covered grave at face value. From Budapest to Warsaw, former Communists are being voted back into power. Why not a homemade Romanian monument to Ceaustalgia? But then I noticed some Romanians scowling nearby. "I hate him!" a woman hissed. An argument erupted between police guards, who noted that at least people had bread under the *conducator*, and my translator, a young sculptor, who reminded them how she was forced to lay mosaic tiles at the "House of the People," Ceauşescu's impossibly ornate, never-finished office megaplex.

It is not totally certain that Ceauşescu is even in this grave. After his execution, the location of his remains was unknown until rumors began to circulate about an unmarked plot in Ghencea. They gradually hardened into fact, leavened by a tale that Ceauşescu was buried with his feet where his head should be, to somehow perturb his eternal rest. But I find it equally plausible he got a decent, if secret, burial. After all, his successors were former members of his regime. Elsewhere in Eastern Europe, the Communists have come back, but after some effort, however incomplete, to account for the past. In Romania, old regimers coopted the revolution immediately. Nostalgia would be largely tautological.

Some former agents of Ceauşescu's dread *Securitate* intelligence service hold *more* power now than before. At

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the marble-floored Ministry of Defense, I sat at a vast table of polished black wood as Gheorghe Tinca, the defense minister, gave a soothing briefing on his commitment to Western values—"you know, freedom, to have an open society." Teodor Melescanu, the foreign minister, delivered an equally affable discourse. Both gentlemen acquired their Ph.D.s and flawless English abroad as trusted assets of *Securitate*. Romanian investors led by a former crony of Ceauşescu's son just bought the Intercontinental Hotel, a plum enterprise in the state's portfolio—though Marriott outbid them by $12 million.

"What difference does it make?" replied a diplomat from a pro-Iliescu Western democracy when I asked how many former members of *Securitate* are in the Romanian Cabinet. And he had a point. Much has improved in the last six years in Romania. The press is rambunctious and free. Romanians can travel where they want. President Ion Iliescu, who steered the 1989 revolution and was elected in a fairish election in 1992, courts the European Union and NATO. The privatizing economy is growing modestly.

Besides, in Ceauşescu's time 4 million Romanians belonged to the Communist Party. Counting their families, half the country's population directly depended upon, and hence was tainted by, the old regime. *Securitate* used to recruit the smartest products of Romania's schools and send them abroad for training. Where else would Romania get the brains it now needs to modernize? The opposition, which wants to restore the exiled King Michael, is divided and ill-equipped to govern.

But none of this quite excuses the authoritarian hue of some of Iliescu's recent internal policies. The Congress, dominated by his party, may soon classify vast quantities of public information as state secrets. Another bill would send journalists who "offend" a public official, *or public official's relative,* to jail for up to seven years. Romanian democrats are fretful.

Farther from Bucharest, the democratic veneer gets thinner. Adrian Moruzi, the mayor of Braşov, a lovely town in Transylvania, is one of the few Romanian pols with a true dissident past; the Communist Party expelled him in 1986 for trying to emigrate. But now he is battling trumped-up corruption charges. He will probably not run for re-election. His plight is typical. When 3,900 mayors were elected two years ago, two-thirds of them came from opposition parties. But 133 have been fired by Iliescu, fifty-two have been suspended from office, and 262 have resigned under pressure from Bucharest.

The real power in Brasov is the Iliescu-appointed county prefect, one Alexandru Popa. Under Ceauşescu he was the Communist boss of an inefficient factory. He demonstrated his democratic vocation when I asked if he thought the proposed press law might be a bit harsh. Popa, decked out in a maroon polyester suit and matching shirt, shifted in his chair. "This is about human rights," he said. "No one has the right to insult anyone in print."

Iliescu's majority coalition in Congress includes a pair of parties which espouse hostility toward Jews, Gypsies and Hungarians, Romania's largest organized minority ethnic group. He has ceded them control over educational and cultural policy. Recently Dan Perjovschi, a graphic artist, tried to mount a satirical depiction of Romanian history at a public museum. One theme was how ancient Romanian princes sometimes fought one another even more bitterly than the Ottoman Turks. The Ministry of Culture censored the text. Perjovschi says many of his friends live for the hope of a fellowship abroad: "People say, 'I don't have time to wait for my country to grow to be normal.' "

Iliescu's supporters in the Western embassies insist his firm rule is at worst a necessary semi-evil, a means to keep order while a Balkan backwater gropes toward freedom and capitalism. On this view, Iliescu's parliamentary alliance with anti-Hungarian parties is purely tactical. He is already preparing to sever it after next year's elections—as you can tell from his recent comparison of the nationalists to Russia's Vladimir Zhirinovsky and from the fact that right-wing newspapers retaliated by labeling Iliescu a Gypsy and a KGB agent. Iliescu doesn't mean to enact the press law, only to brandish it against his enemies in the run-up to the election.

So the argument goes. But talk politics with a Romanian for a few minutes, and eventually he'll employ a word that suggests these political deformations are more enduring: "*Puterea,*" the Power. It is a synonym for the national government, but also for big business, secret services (foreign and domestic) and the press. It connotes not so much an institution as a supra-human force that secretly manipulates ordinary people's lives.

Throughout Romanian history, citizens and leaders alike have believed the best one can do is adapt to the Power's vagaries, appease it—and survive. This survivalist view of politics may explain why, in both world wars, Romanian governments fought first with Germany when Germany was winning and then with the Allies when the Allies were winning. Ceauşescu himself maneuvered skillfully among Washington, Moscow and Beijing—earning accolades as the "maverick" of the Warsaw Pact even as he starved and imprisoned his own people.

Today Ceauşescu's successors slip off *Securitate* trenchcoats and don grey Western business suits. They run a more open society than he did but still pay little, if any, price for corruption or for trimming Romania's newfound freedoms. "There weren't really many Communists here," Adrian Moruzi explains. "But there were many opportunists.... The cynical opportunists climbed the pyramid. And when the political change came, only the top of the pyramid came off. The Communists are gone, but the opportunists are left." And I cannot swear that the man supposedly buried in Ghencea is, in fact, entirely dead.

CHARLES LANE traveled to Romania on a grant provided by the Center for War, Peace, and the News Media.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Defending liberal nationalism.

WRIGHT'S WRONG

By Michael Lind

In his celebrated "Reply to Hayne" address in January 1830, one of the patron saints of American liberal nationalism, Massachusetts Senator Daniel Webster, observed that his sectionalist opponent, Senator Robert Hayne of South Carolina, "may well ask what interest has South Carolina in a canal in Ohio. On his system, it is true, she has no interest.... On that system, Carolina has no more interest in a canal in Ohio than Mexico." It did not occur to either Webster or Hayne that there was a third possibility: that South Carolina would have the same interest in a canal in Mexico as in a canal in Ohio.

This is the position—call it liberal globalism—that Robert Wright defended last week in TRB. (See "Trading Places," TNR, December 4.) Referring to an article published in these pages by John Judis and me on March 27, Wright complained that there is a "logical tension between being a liberal on social issues and a nationalist on economic and military issues." Liberalism, according to Wright, is based on the idea "that you could have been born in someone else's shoes," as a "Mexican peasant" or a "Bosnian Muslim." Since anybody could have been born anywhere, anyone's problem is everyone else's concern.

This is a peculiar understanding of liberalism. None of the greatest liberal thinkers—Aron, Oakeshott, Weber, Mill, Constant, Tocqueville, Hamilton, Madison, Smith, Montesquieu, Hobbes, Locke, Grotius—considered liberalism to be incompatible with a world of sovereign states, local loyalties and historic cultural communities. Even Kant's plan for perpetual peace through a confederacy of republics took for granted the continuing existence of separate states with distinct interests, which would collaborate only on a limited number of matters of common concern.

"The paradox of 'liberal nationalism' is a moral imagination that is expansive domestically yet comes to a screeching halt at America's borders." This caricatures the position of liberal nationalism. The moral imagination of liberal nationalists is founded on something like the Catholic principle of "ordinate charity," which posits concentric rings of obligation, strongest with respect to family and nation, and diminishing—but never completely disappearing—with distance. It is the oversimplified "moral geography" of the liberal globalist that has "an appealing tidiness." Nativists and globalists avoid moral dilemmas by dismissing the moral claims of humanity and the nation, respectively. Liberal nationalists, by contrast, find themselves in a polycentric world of weighted obligations and tragic choices.

Wright attempts to dismiss nationalism as something archaic by referring to "a moral compass that was built sometime after the Middle Ages" and to "tribal impulses and primitive morality." In reality, liberalism is old and nationalism is new. Liberal republicanism—combining the Greco-Roman democratic legacy with medieval inventions like individual and corporate privileges and immunities and written constitutions—traces its pedigree back to the free cities of the European Middle Ages. By contrast, political nationalism—the doctrine that states should correspond to nations, defined by ethnic or linguistic criteria where this is possible—goes back only to the late eighteenth century. In the past two centuries, liberal nationalism, uniting the millennium-old institutions of civic republicanism with the novel conception of the inclusive and egalitarian cultural nation, has managed to free liberal civilization from its long confinement to the Lilliputian scale of city-states and city-leagues.

During most of its brief and recent history, moreover, political nationalism, reflexively linked with "aggression" by America's op-ed mandarins, has usually served as a shield, not a sword. Conquering nations, like the Spanish under Charles V, the French under Napoleon, the Germans under Hitler or the ethnic Russians of the Soviet Empire, have invariably preferred to camouflage their ambitions with the aegis of this or that supranational entity: Catholic Christendom, Enlightened civilization, the Aryan race, the global proletariat. Belligerent nationalisms like the Serbian have been the exception in a century in which most nationalist movements have sought to escape empires, not to found them. It is no coincidence that the most recent philosophical defense of liberal nationalism in English is by Yael Tamir, a citizen of a small, embattled liberal nation-state, Israel. By the standards of liberal globalism, Zionism, like any liberal nationalism, would seem to be illegitimate by definition, since it promotes the particular interests of a particular nation.

Liberal globalism is incompatible not only with a world of self-interested sovereign states but with most conceivable varieties of world federalism. One might imagine a liberal world government, for which the model might be one of the more liberal multinational empires of the past—say, the British Empire at its zenith in 1900. The turn-of-the-century British Empire, though, was a federal structure, in which the dominions like Canada, Australia and New Zealand, unlike the American colonies in 1776, were permitted to promote their particular interests by means of restrictive immigration policies and tariffs on imports from advanced Britain and low-wage British colonies like India. If liberal morality requires a complete absence of particularist legislation impeding flows of immigrants and goods and money, then a "liberal" world government could not even grant its sub-units as much discretion as the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

British dominions possessed. Only a completely unitary, homogeneous planetary state, in which no local government preferences in immigration or trade impeded global legislation for individuals, would satisfy the pure theory of liberal globalism.

Wright concludes his critique of liberal nationalism by musing that the U.S. might be better off if the two parties were redefined as (Republican) nationalists and (Democratic) globalists. "I wish [Pat] Buchanan well—as a candidate for the Republican nomination, at least. Nationalism will probably grow in strength, so we might as well get clear on which party is its natural home." It is already clear, however, that the Democratic Party is the "natural home" of American nationalism at the end of the twentieth century. Congressional Democrats have been far more likely to advocate a national industrial policy rather than the GOP's rigid allegiance to laissez-faire and oppose cold war levels of military spending, and many voted against NAFTA. Buchanan will not be able to turn the Republican Party into a vehicle of blue-collar nationalists. At any rate, his economic nationalism is a footnote to his culture-war message. Neoliberal pundits give Buchanan's half-baked views on trade and immigration more attention than they deserve for two reasons: first, to discredit liberal nationalists by associating them with America's leading nativist, and second, to disguise the fact that the real targets of neoliberal denunciations of "nativism" and "protectionism" are Democratic economic nationalists who are also social liberals, like Dick Gephardt and David Bonior. The fact remains that it is neoliberals who are out of place in the Democratic coalition. They would be more at home among laissez-faire Republicans like Phil Gramm and Dick Armey, who share their libertarian line on trade and immigration.

Even if it were practical, liberal globalism would be repugnant to anyone whose conception of the good life has room for identities and loyalties that are inherited, as well as those that are chosen. A world of countries that are mere zip codes, a global government of individuals instead of a global society of historic nations, is not a goal to which we should aspire, even if the sacrifice of particularism should be portrayed (as it has been by most imperialisms) as the price of prosperity and peace. De Gaulle preferred the ideal of *Europe des patries*, a Europe of homelands, to the chimera of a United States of Europe. In the spirit of de Gaulle, liberal nationalists can counter the banal utopia of the globalists, socialist and liberal alike, with the vision of a decentered world of civilized and independent nations, cooperating for the common good while preserving local and democratic control over the perpetuation of national cultures, immigration, even (shock, horror!) over broad patterns of trade and investment. A world of nations, not a world nation; a globe of homelands, not a globe where nowhere, and thus everywhere, is home. Or as Daniel Webster almost said in his reply to Hayne: Liberty and nationality, now and forever, one and inseparable. •

MOSCOW POSTCARD

REDS UNDER LEBED

By Masha Gessen

What motivates a Russian voter to go to the polls? Forget ideology: it ceased to exist as an institution when the one and only belief system was demolished. Forget compelling self-interest: most Russians are too accustomed to wallowing in misery and being abused by the authorities to believe that a checkmark on Election Day will make a difference in their destinies. These days, a Russian who votes is engaging in a peculiar public ritual based on the suspension of disbelief. Like theater. And what does he want from theater? He of course wants to be entertained, which is why he voted for the lively, and truly spectacular, Zhirinovsky in 1993.

But mere entertainment is no longer enough. The Duma (or lower house of Parliament) elections scheduled for December 17 are a show featuring forty-three parties, each represented by one, two or three visible leaders. From among all those faces, the average Russian voter—who has, in all likelihood, recently experienced crises of national, professional and religious identity—chooses someone with whom he can identify. Then he can experience catharsis, which would make the ritual worth it.

Enter General Alexander Lebed, the new and improved Zhirinovsky. His last name means swan, but he looks like Herman Munster, which gives him an ugly duckling's romantic flair. Like the average Russian, he is unburdened by ideology, demonstratively uninterested in the political process and has trouble telling his political right from his left. (According to surveys conducted by the state's All-Russian Center for the Study of Public Opinion, more than half of all Russians claim to have little or no interest in politics, and nearly as many are hopelessly confused by the political designations "right," "left" and "center.") Lebed has no political program and not much of a plan of action. He does have a smart but folksy sense of humor, a nicely mythologized biography and an endless supply of authoritative statements that conform to voters' sense of reality.

And what a hard reality it is. According to the state opinion center, 52 percent of Russians believe they and others are especially irritable, and 41 percent regularly hear outrage expressed in queues and on public transport. In any given twenty-four-hour period 23 percent "scream at someone" (that's as many as wash their hair and more than twice the number of those who make love). Like the potential voters, Lebed is a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

chronic malcontent. Legend has it that in 1991 he refused to storm the White House, thus dooming the hard-liner coup attempt to failure. But, during Parliamentary hearings on the coup, he declared unequivocally that he had been ready to attack. Last winter, when the president's approval rating dropped to an all-time low, and public opposition to the war in Chechnya stood at 70 percent, Lebed—then still an active-duty general—went on TV to speak against the war. But, just to avoid any confusion, a few months later he lashed out against democrats for their "wish to see their motherland defeated and the Russian military humiliated in Chechnya."

In Russia 43 percent of the people believe that they are deceived frequently or all the time—most often by federal authorities. It's a good place and time to be affiliated with no one and critical of all. With two potential exceptions: the Church, which enjoys the confidence of 47 percent of the people, and the military, which is in second place with 24 percent (only 4 percent trust the Parliament, and 8 percent the president). Lately, General Lebed has taken to arranging photo-ops with Russian Orthodox priests. And he still commands the respect due a general. But he knows, too, how to distance himself from the military when necessary: in one of his few clear programmatic statements, Lebed has spoken out against longer mandatory terms for military service, which should help him overcome female voters' resistance to a military candidate.

ALEXANDER LEBED BY JOHN SPRINGS FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

Women, goes the myth, like Lebed. When he was replaced as commander of the Russian troops in Moldova's breakaway Trans-Dniester region, local women stormed the airport, filling the runways and preventing the replacement general's plane from landing. Oddly, the 45-year-old Lebed, who took part in Soviet crackdowns in Azerbaijan and Georgia, has a reputation as a peacemaker. In 1992 he was placed in charge of Russia's 14th Army, stationed in the tiny former Soviet republic of Moldova, which was fighting off a push for independence on the part of the ethnic Russians in Trans-Dniester. He unloosed all 10,000 of his troops on Moldova—whose entire military numbered 9,000—in an action that has incongruously gone down in popular history as "preventing a war."

After General Lebed "prevented war," he "got the place in order," a nebulous phrase that has become synonymous with Lebed's name and that carries almost magical appeal. According to one opinion survey, 73 percent of Russians now believe that "an iron fist is called for," while another poll shows that 25 percent think a dictatorship like Augusto Pinochet's in Chile is the "only way out of the current situation in the country." Lebed compared himself to Pinochet a year ago, and though he now chooses more palatable role models, like Charles de Gaulle, in a recent interview with the daily *Sevodnia* he expressed the following view of his country's future: "I like the word 'democracy,' but I know for a fact that I myself will not live long enough to see democracy. We have the kind of country where we are going to have to use authoritarian methods to force people to build democracy."

The very appearance of a page-and-a-half-long interview with Lebed in a leading liberal daily, complete with a glowing introduction from one of the paper's young editors, is a powerful indication of Lebed's popularity. Lebed tempers his iron-fist rhetoric and nationalist reputation with statements like, "Nationality is determined by language, culture and territory. There is no point now in trying to figure out who has what color hair, what last name and eye shape." These sorts of qualifiers soothe the consciences of 30-year-olds who have grown disenchanted with liberal values but would feel a bit queasy voting for an unabashed nationalist. Lebed is their man, for, after calming them with the tolerant phrase, he sings the praises of "the three great bastions: the spiritual power of Russian Orthodoxy, the creative spirit of the Russian people and the glory of the Russian military."

This is, of course, the stuff of a presidential campaign. With the presidential election scheduled for June, Lebed is dress-rehearsing in the Parliamentary race. The radio spots for his electoral bloc feature a naturalistic beating-heart soundtrack and a single line: "Russia will recover." This is as rosy a promise as you will hear from the general, who likes to sum up the future in a single line: "You'll work like dogs, and I'll get the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

place in order." Short, rough and cathartic: if any message can get millions of miserable, irritable, mistreated Russians to the polls this December, this is it.

MASHA GESSEN writes for *Sevodnia (Today)*, a daily newspaper in Moscow.

The GOP bore-fest.

CAMP BOB

By John B. Judis

Some 3,300 Florida Republicans, chosen by lot rather than by the candidates, assembled on November 18 at Orlando's new convention center to register their choice for the presidential nomination. They were a diverse group, ranging from a Palm Beach socialite in a power-red blazer to a Cuban-American attorney from Miami in a dark three-piece suit to a bricklayer from Orlando wearing a T-shirt and a hard hat. The candidates poured millions into winning them over. Across from the convention center Bob Dole set up a small tent city, "Camp Bob," where the delegates could chow down on free barbecue. Lamar Alexander imported the Grand Ole Opry for a party the night before the balloting.

But the results themselves failed to alter the political status quo. Dole failed to win by enough to eliminate his opponents, but he still remains the undisputed front-runner. If he does not commit an egregious mistake or suddenly show the disability of age (he is 72), he will win the nomination. Senator Phil Gramm, Dole's closest rival, has his best shot in the South, but Dole's victory here shows that the Senate majority leader will probably hold his own in the region. If you think this news is drab and predictable, it is. If the Florida poll is any indication, this campaign will lack not only excitement, but even the vaguest intimations of political innovation or insight.

Dole succeeded in Florida largely because of his top-rank endorsements and his superior resources—he poured $2 million into the contest—but also because of what he didn't do. In Friday night's debate on CNN's "Larry King Live," he didn't blow up when magazine publisher Malcolm "Steve" Forbes needled him about raising taxes. He calmly explained that he had raised taxes to close corporate loopholes. In his speech to the convention, his voice did not quaver, and his gestures did not seem out of sync, as they have in some recent appearances.

But the content of Dole's campaign comes down to one word—leadership. If he were running for Senate majority leader, he'd be a brilliant candidate. His principal foray outside the Congressional Record has been his Quayle-like attack on Hollywood last May, but he has not repeated that populist rallying cry. Instead, he refers to it as if it were a vote he'd made on the Senate floor for which he'd now like some payback. His supporters back him for who he is and not for any promise of what he will do. "He has given his life for his country," is their current mantra.

As president, Dole promises to be a super-majority leader who would construct government policy out of House Speaker Newt Gingrich's futurism, the Christian Coalition's sociopolitical correctness and the inchoate fears of the voters. Christian Coalition supporters describe him as a "transitional president." Still, if one were to imagine the world plunged into crisis, Dole and Senator Richard Lugar are the only Republican candidates who don't immediately provoke the jitters.

Phil Gramm is the upscale candidate of social meanness—the Lexus to Pat Buchanan's Ford pickup. He and his supporters divide America into those who pull the wagon and those who ride in it. ("What are you, one of these compassion people?" a Gramm supporter exclaimed, after I identified myself as being from THE NEW REPUBLIC.) Gramm is running this year as the man who will say no. "When 'no,' is the right answer," he eloquently told the delegates, "you can count on me to say no." On other issues, he was no less sophisticated. He promised to balance the budget in four years and build prisons that were "not like Holiday Inns." He also said that his "number one foreign policy priority [would be] to get rid of Fidel Castro" and predicted ominously that Castro "would not survive" a Gramm presidency. Statements like that—broadcast internationally over CNN—demonstrate that Gramm is not ready for prime time.

Lamar Alexander is the best illustration of his own axiom about the corruption of Washington. An able and innovative governor who used the power of his office to improve education and attract jobs, Alexander has been reduced by his Washington-bred presidential ambitions to mouthing mindless anti-government platitudes. Listen to him closely, and you'll have no idea what he'd do as president besides vetoing appropriations and sermonizing about the dangers of delinquency and drug abuse. His sentences defy grammar and sense: "I am running for president because our country needs our help," he says. The last man to run entirely on a promise of personal inspiration was Jimmy Carter, and it left him ill-prepared for the presidency.

Pat Buchanan has two themes—religious war and America First—the latter a combination of protectionism and isolationism. He emphasizes these themes differently, depending on who's listening. But Florida's Republican Party was not a good audience for him—too many transplanted Eastern suburbanites, too many business owners reliant on Florida's import-based

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tourist economy and too many Cuban-Americans offended by Buchanan's anti-immigration stand. At a loss, Buchanan quoted the Bible and vowed to defend "God's country," but he had to compete for that message with Alan Keyes, who believes that every problem facing America has been caused by the collapse of what he calls "the marriage-based family system" and can be solved by the embrace of biblical morality.

Ralph Reed and the Christian Coalition were also on hand in Orlando. Reed held a "God and Country" rally the evening before the straw poll at a junior-high gymnasium. The high point was Naomi Judd's introduction of Lamar Alexander. Explaining that she didn't like political rallies, Judd said, "I'd rather run naked through a Teamster meeting." The low point was when the rally's organizers turned off the sound system on Keyes, a crowd favorite, just as he was about to launch an attack on Dole.

PHIL GRAMM BY JOHN SPRINGS FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

Reed's strategy in this election has been to back the agnostic front-runners, Dole and Gramm, rather than the true-believers, Buchanan and Keyes, in the hope that the coalition can then take credit for their victory and win its share of political spoils. At the rally, Reed claimed that a third of the delegates were Christian Coalition members, and he demanded that the Republican nominees pledge their allegiance to appoint a vice president who adheres to the coalition's pro-life line. "In politics as in romance, you dance with the one who brung you," Reed said.

But this strategy is based on wishful thinking and sleight-of-hand. In Orlando, at best one in five delegates were displaying the Christian Coalition stickers that Reed's lieutenants handed out. When I asked one sticker-wearing delegate about his affiliation, he told me that he didn't belong to the Christian Coalition but was flashing the sticker as a favor to his boss, a local politician. The Christian Coalition has followers in Florida's panhandle, but it hasn't taken hold elsewhere. Last year, in Lake County, next to Orlando, three Christian Coalition incumbents on the school board were rudely ousted from office—by more than two-to-one margins in the Republican primary—after attempting to impose the organization's agenda on the county's schools. A majority of Florida Republicans are pro-choice, and even those who aren't are leery of the Coalition's fanaticism. At the Orlando convention, many of the Dole, Gramm and Alexander delegates were deeply hostile to the Christian right. Dole himself didn't mention abortion in his speech to the delegates.

Steve Forbes, like Alan Keyes, is a panacea candidate. For Forbes, it is the flat tax and "honest money" (the gold standard). But in his speeches, the bookish Forbes occasionally says things that are startlingly original. He was the only candidate in Orlando who seemed to understand that America's problems with drink and delinquency did not begin the year that the Supreme Court outlawed prayer in schools. (Forbes remarked, for example, that, in the 1820s, Americans imbibed five times as much alcohol per person as they do now.) Forbes was also the only candidate to utter the word "microprocessor," though as he was explaining the importance of high technology, the Gramm supporter sitting in front of me, who was browsing through a photography magazine reviewing autofocus SLRs, turned around and declared, "I can't understand a word he is talking about." Forbes got eighteen votes out of 3,300, 248 fewer than Alan Keyes.

Indiana Senator Richard Lugar is the Bruce Babbitt of this year's presidential primary. He was an excellent mayor of Indianapolis and has been a first-rate senator but, like Babbitt, is utterly inept at self-promotion and showmanship. In Orlando, Lugar broke ranks with the other candidates by urging "sensitivity" (a neighbor of the dreaded compassion) toward African Americans and Hispanics. Lugar also warned that the candidates were being irresponsible in opposing the use of American troops as guarantors of a Bosnian peace treaty. "It will not do in the current crisis we face to undercut the president. We cannot take the position that we have no obligations in the world," Lugar said. He was absolutely right. For his candor and maturity, Lugar got five votes in the straw poll. That says something about Florida's Republicans, and also perhaps about the coming presidential election. •

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Poland: back to the future.

Ex-coms

By Anne Applebaum

The last time I saw Alexander Kwasniewski, it was late in the summer of 1989, and he was hanging around the press gallery of the Polish Parliament. It was an auspicious day: Tadeusz Mazowiecki, Poland's first modern, non-communist prime minister, was due to make his inaugural speech. There were lots of foreign reporters about and lots of Polish journalists, too, along with lots and lots of television cameras. But not one of the latter was pointed in Kwasniewski's direction.

"Morose" is not exactly the right word to describe the mood of the man who was, at the time, Minister of Youth and Sport in the last Communist government; "remorseful" doesn't exactly capture it, either. It was more a combination of the two, with a soupçon of self-pity thrown in the mix. Alexander Kwasniewski had always prided himself on being the most reform-minded of communists; he counted among his friends many leading dissidents, including Adam Michnik, the polemicist and publisher. Now, however, all of those hours wasted at leaden Politburo meetings, all of that time spent buttering up boring Central Committee members and all of those years of hacking in the communist student unions (Kwasniewski never actually graduated from university; he lied about this on his electoral application forms) seemed to have been wasted. Mazowiecki had not asked him to join the new Solidarity-led government, and a gloomy Kwasniewski thought that his carefully cultivated political career had finally come to an end.

Only six years have passed since that day—but they have been six good years for Alexander Kwasniewski. In what must count as one of the great political comebacks in recent Polish history, Kwasniewski was elected president of Poland last weekend, defeating the incumbent, Lech Walesa—Solidarity hero, Nobel Prize winner, household name—by a narrow, but decisive, 4 percent margin.

No doubt many will now describe Kwasniewski's victory purely as a rejection of "harsh" economic reform: at least two news broadcasts that I heard within a few hours of the election used that expression. And certainly it is true that some of his supporters are among the approximately one-quarter to one-third of Poles who have not managed to succeed in what is now, in fact, the fastest-growing economy in Europe. A few are probably pensioners, and others feel nostalgic. Some of the unemployed long for the certainties of the past and believe that Kwasniewski will bring them back.

It is equally worth noting that Kwasniewski's victory resulted, in large part, from the failure of his opponents. Lech Walesa, who surrounded himself with an absurd collection of fools, flattering courtiers and former chauffeurs, proved an unpredictable and ineffective president; the former dissident intellectuals, who should have become the core members of the new democratic political system, have spent the past six years squabbling with one another. They can also be blamed for failing to remove the privileges and perks of the former communists when they could have done so. Girding themselves up to fight a "nationalist" right-wing threat that never emerged, many failed to perceive the resurgence of the left-wing threat happening under their noses.

But what is more important about Kwasniewski's victory—and what many in the West still don't seem to understand about former communists—is that in most countries they no longer represent the past. They represent the capitalist future; in fact, they *are* the capitalist future, however corrupt, kleptocratic and unfair that future may be. For the most part, in fact, I believe that Poles voted for Kwasniewski because since 1989, he, like other former communists in Central Europe, has come to represent success: he has become prosperous, his friends are prosperous, he promises to make other people prosperous, too.

There is no mystery about how this transformation in image was effected. In the past six years, Alexander Kwasniewski has lost weight, stopped drinking, taught himself to speak good English. He has familiarized himself with the concepts of "NATO" and "European Community." He has even dutifully toured Western capitals, making appearances at the offices of *The Wall Street Journal* and the Royal Institute for International Affairs in London, impressing audiences in a way that Walesa, who is rumored never to have read a book, could not.

Since 1989, Kwasniewski has also managed, one way or another, to enrich himself. During the election campaign, for example, it emerged that his wife owns, among other things, about $65,000 (quite a lot in Polish terms) worth of shares in an insurance company, which had been "privatized" a few years earlier. Although most of the company's shares are publicly traded, it seems that a few people were given the privilege of buying them privately, at an unknown rate. According to one Polish newspaper, another $100,000 worth are owned by the wife of the Polish prime minister; either shareholders include two former communist deputy prime ministers, as well as a former communist finance minister and a former Communist Party first secretary. Curiously, the new Polish president failed to declare his wife's interest in the company in his parliamentary register of holdings, not that that prevented him from winning.

In doing all of these things, however, Kwasniewski has behaved no differently from other former communists

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

in Poland; indeed, he has behaved no differently from other former communists anywhere in Eastern Europe. Marxist-Leninism is dead, but the social structure it created is not. Far from being eliminated by the onset of democracy and capitalism in 1989, former communists have been by far the biggest beneficiaries. One Polish sociologist tracked the careers of several hundred top nomenklatura—officials in the government and the bureaucracy—from 1988 to 1993. He discovered that over half of the Poles had become top executives in the private sector, and in Hungary the number was about 60 percent. As heads of factories, banks and government bureaucracies, they were in the best position to take advantage of privatization. As owners of houses and cars and secret bank accounts—again, those privileges and perks which remained in place—they were in a better position to find jobs when they lost their old ones.

Most of all, former communists have been the primary beneficiaries of what Poles call the "concessionary capitalist" economy: that part of the private sector, enormous in Central Europe (as it is in some Western European countries) which still, in one way or another, lives off state subsidies, state contracts, state largess. Former communists who bought shares through corrupt deals—and Mrs. Kwasniewski is not the only one—are concessionary capitalists. Friends of the old regime who can start companies with soft loans guaranteed by the government are also concessionary capitalists. Those who have quicker and easier access to licenses because of their friends in the mayor's office are concessionary capitalists, too.

It is fair to say, in fact, that most concessionary capitalists came legally into their riches through so-called "nomenklatura privatization," a process which gave, or sold for a nominal sum, state property to its current managers. While this can be a legitimate process—management buyouts happen in the West, too—in the former Eastern bloc, where there is very little public accountability, they are not always ideal. I once came across an astonishing example of this process in Lviv, in western Ukraine, where an electronics company—really a conglomerate including thirty-nine subsidiaries, twenty-two daughter companies and nine joint ventures—called Elektron was being privatized by "selling shares." Just like the West—except that the company was valued according to the cost of its buildings (under $18 million at the exchange rates of the time) and managers were using company profits to "buy" their own shares. Even after privatization, one of them told me, Elektron would still have the same privileged access to raw materials—subsidized by the government—as other state companies.

All of this meant that, while the Communist Party might have dissolved, the old boys' network attached to it remained in place. Most party members never mattered much and don't now, but the inner core—perhaps 100,000 people—still have, as they have always had, a strong sense of identity, not unlike the class identity of, say, the British aristocracy. They have been to the same schools, the same universities, the same higher institutes of Marxist-Leninism; they recognize one another, as does any ruling class in any country, through dress, accent, mutual friends and manner of speech. They help one another to find jobs, obtain state subsidies and get bank loans. In most countries, former communist politicians have better contacts with the media, especially the regional media. They know what party organizations are for; most of all, they have supporters who will pour money into their party coffers.

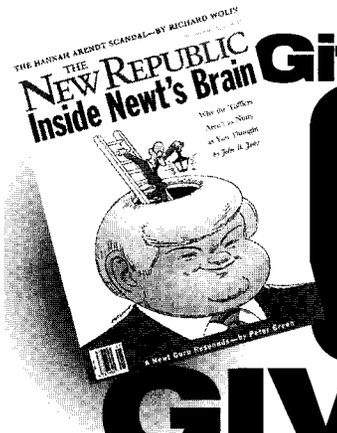
Hardly surprising, then, that they seem wealthier, better organized and more experienced than their opponents. Hardly surprising that Kwasniewski's advertising was sleeker, his campaign better financed, his wife better dressed. Kwasniewski had the funds to spend last summer traveling around the country, visiting small towns and cities, making speeches everywhere he went; no other political candidate, with the exception of Walesa, who was presumably too arrogant, could possibly have afforded to do that.

And, again not surprisingly, Kwasniewski seemed the candidate more likely to build upon Poland's substantial economic achievements. When the former Communist Party came back to power in Hungary last year, it turned out that over 60 percent of people who described their occupation as "businessman" had voted for it—not what one would expect if one still thought that the words "former communist" and "capitalist" were somehow contradictory. The numbers are no doubt similar in Poland; the statistics show that Kwasniewski's electorate is certainly younger and wealthier than Walesa's in any case. One can call him a sleazy opportunist, but it doesn't matter: Kwasniewski succeeded in post-communist Poland in the way that many people would like to succeed in post-communist Poland. This is not an American economy, where anybody, at least in theory, can succeed if they work hard: sleaze and opportunism are the paths to Polish success.

What this election really proves, in fact, is not that Poland has rejected the legacy of Solidarity, or that Poles long for bread queues and censorship, but that Poland is finally—at last—becoming a normal country. As in a normal country, the more telegenic candidate won. As in a normal country, the candidate with the most money won. As in a normal country, the candidate who kept talking about the past emerged the loser; Walesa's attacks on Kwasniewski, mostly focused on his communist career, were not powerful enough to sway even an essentially anti-communist country like Poland. As in a normal country, the winning candidate is a super-professional political operator, with a handful of shady friends and the odd hidden business deal kicking around in the background. Perhaps we should not have expected any less.

ANNE APPLEBAUM's book, *Between East and West: Across the Borderlands of Europe* (Pantheon), was published last year.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



Gift Offer

GET SMART

GIVE *The New Republic* for the HOLIDAYS

50% Off

Now is the perfect time to let your smart friends and relatives in on a good thing, with **holiday gift subscriptions** to ***The New Republic.*** It's the perfect way to compliment their intelligence, and a smart way for you to avoid the holiday shopping madness.

You'll save money, thanks to our low gift rates, and you can save even more by adding or renewing a subscription for yourself. Best of all, if you order two or more subscriptions, we'll give you a free copy of ***The New Republic's Guide to the Candidates, 1996.***

It couldn't be easier. We'll send a card to announce each gift, and the annual subscription (48 issues) will begin in January. PLAY IT SMART AND ORDER TODAY!

SMART Give a subscription to ***The New Republic*** for just $69.97 for 48 weekly issues.

SMARTER Give a second subscription for just $44.99 and get a free gift for yourself: ***The New Republic's Guide to the Candidates, 1996.***

Free Book

SMARTEST Renew or begin your own subscription at the same low gift rate. Your own subscription, in addition to one gift, also qualifies you for ***The Guide to the Candidates, 1996.***

(Foreign gifts must be prepaid: please add $15 per gift for Canadian and $30 per gift for other Foreign gifts to cover postage.)

CALL TOLL-FREE NOW 1-800-827-1289

RETURN COUPON TO:
The New Republic
P.O. Box 602
Mt. Morris, IL 61054-8053

GIVE THE NEW REPUBLIC for $69.97 for 48 issues and save 50% off the regular newsstand price of $141.60.

RECIPIENT'S NAME

ADDRESS

CITY STATE ZIP

Renew or begin your own subscription at the same low gift rate:
❑ I'm (❑ renewing ❑ beginning) my own subscription.
❑ Payment enclosed ❑ Bill me later
Charge my ❑ Amex ❑ Visa ❑ MC

ACCOUNT # EXP. DATE

SIGNATURE

Mail or Call 1-800-827-1289

Give a second subscription for just $44.99 and get a free gift for yourself, ***The New Republic's Guide to the Candidates, 1996.***

RECIPIENT'S NAME

ADDRESS

CITY STATE ZIP

YOUR NAME

ADDRESS

CITY

STATE ZIP

NGADC5

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE MEDICARE BOOM

By Matthew Miller

Listen to Democrats rant about the GOP's proposed $270 billion seven-year Medicare savings, and you know the end is nigh. Republicans are "cutting below what the private sector will spend," says Health and Human Services Secretary Donna Shalala. The cuts will "force many to abandon their Medicare patients," add House Californians George Miller and Nancy Pelosi. The rest of the media have echoed their fears. Medicare, the syllogism runs, already pays only 60-70 percent of what private insurers pay for health care; taking $270 billion out of the system will only widen this gap; the elderly thus face virtual abandonment in a doctorless wasteland, a suffering inflicted solely to fund a tax cut for rich GOP pals. Polls now show this mantra has broken through. Anxious seniors say Newt and company should back off. Democrats are starting to think they could ride Medicare back to a House majority and a second Clinton term in 1996.

In the face of this artillery, Republican rhetoric has stressed that they're only slowing the projected growth rate of Medicare from 10 percent to 7 percent yearly; that per-person expenses will thus rise 40 percent, from $4,800 to $6,700; and that managed care can achieve these savings without compromising quality. They've persuaded the media to report faithfully the distinction between "savings" and "cuts," which is no small achievement. But it's small comfort when they're taking a political beating.

Strangely, the Democrats' assaults, the Republicans' defenses and the media's coverage of the Medicare battle have left an essential fact undiscussed. Put aside for a moment the GOP's unaffordable tax cut for the rich and their unjust abolition of a guaranteed safety net for the poor. The surprising truth is that in cities across the country Medicare is already paying *more* for many medical services than private insurers pay. Between the continued increases under the GOP plan and the pace of private-sector cost control under managed care, this trend will only accelerate. Rather then flee, this means doctors will likely look back a decade from now and think the growth rates in the GOP plan were a remarkably good deal. In fact, in this year's budget endgame, $270 billion may be the least we should be looking to save; and the Democrats' demagoguery is even worse than we thought.

Piercing the conventional wisdom on Medicare's payment gap means examining the arcane work of some Washington policy wonks and going beyond the Beltway to see what's happening in medical markets that look most like others will in the future. The result is another case study in how Washington debate often bears little relation to what's going on in the real world. "With $270 billion over seven years you just nibble at the edges—it's a piece of cake," says one health industry consultant in Minnesota, who requested anonymity because his clients, who'd like to get more from Medicare, wouldn't be pleased. "Policymakers may not realize," says James Field, who's studied California health care markets for the Advisory Board, an industry research group, "that Medicare is often the high payer."

The threshold canard with respect to what everyone supposedly "knows" about Medicare is the official "fact" that Medicare pays doctors far less than the private sector. This analysis, which in its latest annual incarnation claims Medicare pays 68 percent of what private insurers pay, is authored by an obscure Washington entity called the Physician Payment Review Commission (or PPRC). The commission's figure gets bandied about without scrutiny in high-minded discussions everywhere, from "The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer" to think-tank panels to the Senate floor.

Nestled on L Street in downtown Washington and with a staff of Ph.D.s, the nonpartisan PPRC was set up by Congress in 1985 to analyze physician payments under Medicare and to recommend reforms. It's a high-stakes job. Medicare is the single biggest patient in the country, accounting for 26 percent of the $170 billion doctors received in 1993. With budget deficit pressures making Medicare a perennial target for savings, the PPRC sends Congress an annual report that, among other things, estimates how Medicare's fees compare to those paid by the private sector. This comparison is vital for policymakers since the question of whether Medicare cuts will affect elderly access to care depends crucially on what the competition—the private sector—happens to be paying doctors.

To calculate the 68 percent figure, the PPRC works overtime combing through three huge databases of pri-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

vate fee-for-service payments. There's only one problem: the analysis barely takes into account discounted prices paid by HMOs and other forms of managed care. These plans, which now cover 50 million Americans, negotiate fiercely with doctors and hospitals and are sparking a revolution in the cost of health care delivery. Yet, until this year, HMOs didn't figure in the PPRC's analysis at all. "The problem," says Christopher Hogan, a senior PPRC analyst, "is you can't get good data for managed care plans." Hogan acknowledges that the commission's new sample of thirty of the nation's 590 HMOs, chosen for convenience because they use payment schedules similar to Medicare's, is inadequate. His bosses agree. "There's not a representative sample of HMOs in the calculations," says Uwe Reinhardt, the Princeton health economist who served on the PPRC until earlier this year. The PPRC admits sheepishly that getting the comparison right, by collecting actual managed care payment data for the highest-volume services, is "clearly a much more difficult task" than the commission can take on. To make matters worse, the data the PPRC does use dates from 1989 to 1993, ancient history in a fast-moving market where, for example, California's big private payers have won an unprecedented 14 percent price *rollback* in the last two years. No wonder one Congressional Budget Office analyst says "the people who work on these calculations have made some heroic assumptions."

Beyond the Beltway, the reaction to the 68 percent figure that's become a Washington staple is less polite. Three dozen doctors, insurance and hospital executives, health economists and industry consultants I spoke with across the country expressed nearly unanimous disbelief. A sampling: "I dispute that wholeheartedly," says Tom McCabe, an attorney-consultant and former senior executive at Friendly Hills, a California health care network, who says Medicare is often the highest payer in his market. "Totally, totally ludicrous," says Tom Simmer, a senior executive at a Michigan health plan. Another analyst says the figure is "not just wrong, it's profoundly misleading." Gail Wilensky, the incoming chairman of the PPRC, who ran the Medicare program under President Bush, is equally blunt. "I don't believe it, and I've told them that," says Wilensky, who as a health policy expert has spoken frequently with doctors in every part of the country. "It's so out of sync with what I hear in the real world that I don't believe it." Only the American Medical Association told me the figure was accurate.

Still, let's say the AMA's right. What's stunning is that even if you dismiss all these concerns and accept the "68" as divine revelation, Medicare may be paying more than the private sector before long anyway. Why? The consensus among professional staff I spoke with in Congress, the administration, the AMA and the PPRC was that, under GOP plans, Medicare physician fees will rise modestly in the years ahead, perhaps by 2.5 percent annually. In the last few years, private fees have *declined* 1 to 2 percent yearly (arguably a conservative basis for a forecast, given that big private plans in California are expecting overall premiums to drop 20 percent in the next five years). Extend these two trendlines and a decade from now Medicare pays more.

The point here is not to pick on the poor PPRC but to suggest that, just as the "missile gap" turned out to be a myth in 1960, the Medicare payment gap isn't quite what it seems today. Confront Washington wonks with fast-changing markets, and the "findings" they spit out by measuring what can be measured may be useless. Indeed, common sense suggests that the very notion of an aggregate national comparison of Medicare and private rates isn't meaningful. You have to look city by city to really know what's up, comparing, for example, what Medicare and HMOs are actually paying in Los Angeles or Atlanta or Detroit for cataracts, bypasses, hip replacements, you name it. And, as several Washington wonks lamented, that kind of data just hasn't been available.

At least not until recently. But the same market forces that are driving down health costs have created new business niches for firms that collect information on who pays which doctors how much. Their emerging findings—provided to customers that include insurance companies and physician group practices looking to set optimal prices in a market—point to an inescapable conclusion: in many instances, Medicare has started paying more to doctors than private plans do.

In August, a study documenting this fact by Medirisk Inc. of Atlanta created ripples in medical circles when it was picked up by Harris Meyer of *American Medical News*, the trade paper of the AMA. Medirisk's physician payment data is compiled from a survey of 1,300 managed care plans and a database of over 450 million current insurance claims records. Medirisk found numerous examples in which market-specific managed care fees were at or below Medicare—some as much as 40 percent below. In North Carolina, for example, Medicare paid $273 for a colonoscopy; a negotiated fee was $248. A cataract removal in Oklahoma cost Medicare $1,039; a negotiated fee was $874. In Florida, a skin biopsy put Medicare out $54; a negotiated fee was $40. In ten states plus the District of Columbia, Medirisk found that private plans priced some common office visits below Medicare; in Washington, Medicare's $38 payment was sliced as low as $20.

In an expanded analysis Medirisk conducted for THE NEW REPUBLIC, the trend suggested by these earlier findings was broadened and confirmed. Medicare and negotiated physician fees were compared in forty markets in every region in the country, from Nashville to Sacramento. The analysis looked at 1,000 "highly significant" medical procedures. In their comparison of 40,000 market-specific fees (the forty markets multiplied by these 1,000 procedures), Medirisk found that 6,250, or more than 15 percent, of the procedures could be purchased at a rate lower than Medicare's. Among the most common were skin biopsies, cer-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tain office visits, electroencephalograms (EEGs), chest x-rays and psychiatric diagnostic interviews.

In some cases, Medicare's relative generosity was extraordinary. For a shoulder dislocation treatment, negotiated rates were 58 to 72 percent less than Medicare's in Phoenix, Philadelphia and Worcester. A common catheter procedure to measure urine flow cost private plans 43 to 62 percent less than Medicare in Cleveland, Phoenix, San Diego and Research Triangle, North Carolina. In Washington, D.C., one type of coronary artery bypass was 65 percent lower. Common chest x-rays cost 16 to 24 percent less in Birmingham and Orlando. To Medirisk, these findings documented "a verified trend, not isolated to a particular geographic area or clinical specialty." (Readers should bear in mind that Medirisk has a stake in these findings being more broadly understood, since this may encourage potential customers to license their data to help price or buy physician services in specific markets.)

I found corroborating evidence in interviews with private plans, doctors and consultants around the country. One Midwestern HMO's rates, for example, were 6 percent below the Medicare fee-for-service schedule on average; it plans a further 2 percent fee reduction next year. An anesthesiologist in Colorado told me managed care plans are "almost extorting us—saying, 'If you won't take it, we'll find someone who will,' " and in many cases offering prices below Medicare. Similar stories came from Minnesota, Pennsylvania, Washington, Oregon and California.

Cardiology is becoming a particular hardship case. Medicare pays about $20 billion to doctors and hospitals for cardiac care yearly; such payments make up 30 to 40 percent of the typical tertiary care hospital's revenue and half of the typical cardiologist's income—a lucky thing, given the free-fall in the amount of such specialty care private plans will pay for. In one Southern California practice area, for example, where fee-for-service might have supported four cardiologists serving 40,000 patients, under managed care the work is channeled to just two. "Straight Medicare today is seen as a good payer," says Peter Hoagland, a San Diego cardiologist. "There's very little else out there that pays as well." Cardiologist David Spiegel says the proposed Medicare savings "aren't draconian and won't drive doctors away." "Often on managed care you make less per patient than on Medicare," says Mark Lurie, a cardiologist in Torrance, California. "Any doctor would be crazy to turn it down—everything else is going to be going down." Competition is so tough in Southern California that hospitals are now offering "package" prices for coronary bypasses, including both hospital and physician services, for as little as $13,000—less than what Medicare is paying for the hospital component *alone*. For the same overall package, Medicare pays up to $30,000.

To anyone familiar with the laws of supply and demand, these downward pressures on prices are overdue. Hospitals operate at just 60 percent occupancy nationwide. The overhang of surplus doctors is similar. HMOs like those run by Kaiser Permanente, a premiere managed care provider, typically employ 150 physicians for every 100,000 people they serve; the national average is 240, or 60 percent more, and will rise to 270 by decade's end, given the young Dr. Kildares already in the pipeline. This kind of benchmark means as many as 150,000 of the country's 660,000 physicians may be redundant, according to estimates by the Pew Commission on the Future of the Health Professions.

With docs on the run, it's no surprise that fees are starting to drop below those set by the Soviet-style Medicare fee-for-service pricing system. Laboring in the best tradition of the five-year plan, Medicare's fee-setting mandarins take into account the time, effort, even the insurance costs that go into a medical procedure, everything but the crucial private-sector determinants of price, i.e. what other customers are willing to pay for a service and what doctors, when you press them, are willing to accept. Private payers just don't play the game this way any longer. "I couldn't believe how the auto companies started manhandling us over here," said one executive at a Detroit health plan. "Now they treat us like muffler suppliers."

I tried to discuss these trends with several analysts at the AMA's Center for Health Policy Research, but they weren't allowed to talk on the record. I also asked to interview AMA President Lonnie Bristow and General Counsel Kirk Johnson. Spokesman James Stacey called back a few days later to say that "[t]he AMA is not interested in commenting upon anecdotal observations with respect to the various market forces." If the AMA is saying that the government, the media and the research community should seek to confirm findings like Medirisk's, they're right. But the notion that these are isolated anecdotes is false; the evidence more than suffices for the "probable cause" detectives need to get a search warrant and do a thorough investigation. Doctors, of course, have a lot to lose if the myth of the Medicare payment gap is exploded. Perhaps that's why Oregon Governor (and doctor) John Kitzhaber, who has seen evidence of these trends himself, says "[the AMA's] lobbying organization does not advance the larger public policy debate."

Still, if the Democrats are being disingenuous about the horrifying cuts in Medicare, the Republicans have their problems, too. Their proposal to reduce Medicare costs by shepherding patients into Medicare HMOs may well lead to the biggest bonanza created by government since oil lease and cellular license lotteries. Maybe the Republicans don't understand these particular HMOs' economics. But the AMA does; that's why they've secured a piece of the action in exchange for their support.

Congress first gave Medicare beneficiaries the option to enroll in HMOs as far back as 1982. Today, however, only 9 percent of seniors are signed up (vs. 23 percent of Americans of all ages). That's going to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

change under the GOP plan, which will give seniors a voucher to buy such coverage if they find it attractive.

Millions, in fact, will find it very attractive, thanks to the way the voucher's value is calculated. Today, Medicare pays HMOs a fixed rate of 95 percent of what traditional fee-for-service Medicare costs per person in a county. This 5 percent "cut" was what our solons reckoned would be Medicare's way of getting in on the savings available from managed care.

But it doesn't take a genius to see that the 95 percent scheme rewards cities where doctors have for years been practicing medicine (and padding their incomes) with a "when in doubt, do more" philosophy, while punishing those cost-effective docs who've held down unnecessary tests and procedures. The result? Medicare payments to HMOs vary wildy across the country. The lowest this year is in South Dakota, at $177 per person per month; the peak is in the Bronx, at $679, or 283 percent higher. Since the range of Medicare's fee adjustments for legitimate geographic cost differences (like higher urban wages) is only plus or minus 20 percent, this means that "volume" differences in how doctors actually practice account for virtually all the variation in what Medicare HMOs get paid.

If you're a doctor or entrepreneur (or both) who knows just how much unnecessary care gets delivered today, this overpayment for past excesses presents a fabulous arbitrage opportunity. Why? On average, Medicare fee-for-service reimbursements reflect an experience of 2,500 "inpatient days per thousand" seniors yearly, a common industry proxy for costs. In cost-conscious California, which has more managed care, this figure might drop as low as 1,500. Yet, when providers bear the risk and are paid a fixed fee per month rather than getting reimbursed for each service, they suddenly find they can treat seniors with as little as 800-900 inpatient days per thousand. With costs thus dropping 40 to 70 percent, but Medicare payments continuing at 95 percent of what they were before, you don't need to be Warren Buffett to tally the take.

What's more, these profits come not from herding seniors into a medical hell, as managed care Luddites would have you believe, but in a way that actually gives seniors more for less. Increasingly, Medicare HMOs offer extras like eyeglasses, dental care, prescription drugs and lower copayments for office visits, which together can mean annual out-of-pocket savings of $1,000 to $1,500. How is this bounty possible while still delivering a fat profit to the provider? Mispricing and selection. Twenty percent of seniors account for more than 80 percent of Medicare's costs. If you can recruit low-cost patients from the healthier majority and still get Medicare to overpay for them, everyone wins—except, of course, sicker seniors and those in counties where Medicare isn't overpaying, who in effect subsidize the extra benefits the lucky elderly get. That's why medical insiders agree that converting traditional Medicare patients to HMOs in high-paying areas (mainly big cities and places with teaching hospitals) is "the next big thing." One West Coast medical group with 9,000 Medicare HMO patients told me that if they can get their 7,500 fee-for-service seniors into their HMO as planned, they'll add $10 million to their bottom line. If half the elderly are convertible on these terms, that's a $25 billion transfer from Uncle Sam to provider profits. Bedside accounting like this explains why Medicare HMOs are poised to grow like wildfire.

You'd think free market Republicans would stamp out welfare for Medicare HMOs as we know it by requiring competitive bids in each city, rather than Kremlinesque overpayments, to determine the cost of care. Even the PPRC has urged this reform. Instead, under GOP plans, those rich payments will be the base on which further annual *increases* of 4 to 5 percent get added. The result is a continued windfall that goes mostly to investor-owned HMOs who hunt the Medicare business with lust. That's why the AMA made sure its members can form their own provider networks, so as not to miss out on medicine's last great gravy train. Should we be outraged? You bet. Still, it's not too late to take the arbitrage out of Medicare and include competitive bidding in all the big cities that are ready for it rather than just the handful that HCFA plans to pilot next year.

Reasonable as $270 billion in savings may be, there are caveats. A fall in private-sector payments means that the old ruse of shifting health costs from government to business may be ending. Since this helped subsidize health care for the uninsured poor, achieving universal coverage is more important than ever. So, over time, is increasing the fee-for-service payments that cover the sicker seniors who stay in traditional Medicare. Finally, we'll have to figure out whether we're willing to pay whatever it takes for every possibly useful new technology. Only that will determine if even the 40 percent growth in the GOP's "austerity" plan feels too tight.

Nevertheless, Medicare—at 12 percent of the budget and growing—is in many ways a classic example of what's wrong with both parties. The Democrats are demagoguing when vast savings could legitimately be made. The Republicans are not living up to their principles, choosing instead to pay off a political lobby and to engage in their own brand of social engineering to get millions of seniors into HMOs fast (or both). The tantalizing thing is: if both parties could scrap the charades, we could dramatically cut the budget deficit, save many worthy programs that President Clinton would applaud and still give seniors the health care they deserve. In Portland, Oregon, over half the elderly are in Medicare HMOs, report overwhelming satisfaction with their care and get treated at costs that are the envy of the country. It can be done. But, until the parties get serious, we're stuck in the current impasse, where it's not clear which option is worse: the GOP budget, or the Democrats' irresponsibility. •

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

BOOKS & The Arts

Stanley Kauffmann on Films

A Predicament

The following is the text of a talk given at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington on November 9 in a discussion of the use of the Holocaust on stage and screen.

When people question the propriety of the Holocaust as a subject for art, they are rarely concerned with painting or music or poetry or fiction: they mean theater or film. No one, as far as I know, has ever questioned the fitness of Anselm Kiefer's paintings or Arnold Schoenberg's music or Nelly Sachs's poetry or Piotr Rawicz's fiction on this subject. It is the practice of enactment that disturbs, and even then, the disturbance comes more from film than from theater.

Here is a paragraph that can serve as a text. It comes from a recent book called *Flickers* by the English critic Gilbert Adair. Says Adair:

> A few shameless miscalculations aside ... *Schindler's List* was not at all the disgrace one had every right to expect. It was still, however, a monstrosity. It was, after all, a Hollywood film like any other film (the first words one saw on the screen were "Amblin Entertainment") and it was shot like any other Hollywood film. It had ... a cast, probably, of thousands. And what I see when I watch the film, what, hard as I try, I cannot prevent myself from seeing, is that cast being put through its paces on some foggy, nocturnal location, put through its paces by the boyishly handsome director in his snazzy windcheater, his red N.Y. Yankees baseball cap, his granny glasses and his beard.

This paragraph—I've condensed it: there's more in the same vein—is well worth examining.

First, it's about *Schindler's List.* If one is to discuss the proprieties, aesthetic, social, moral, of making fictional films about the Holocaust, this is the prime instance because it looms so large in the filmgoing experience of so many and because it has drawn more attention than any other fictional film on the subject. *Schindler's List* emphasizes strongly some difficulties that a fictional Holocaust film faces.

Second, Adair is frank about the surprise involved. I went to the film prepared for offense and was disarmed within two minutes. John Gross, who wrote the most intelligent favorable review of the film that I have read, in *The New York Review of Books,* spent the first six paragraphs of his long critique adjusting to the fact that he had liked it. It had come bearing the stigma of Spielberg's previous success.

Third, the provenance was Hollywood. If we can fantasize that this film, exactly as it is, frame by frame, had arrived from another source, I believe that its reception would have been more cordial in certain resistant quarters. If the opening credit had said Film Polski or Sacis or some other foreign brand name instead of Amblin Entertainment, it's a fair guess that fewer nerves would have been grated right at the start. I can't remember that any European film, of the dozens that have been made about the Holocaust, has aroused much opposition. It's also interesting to note that, when a book on the Holocaust comes from a publisher who has made millions on lesser books about lesser subjects, few literary critics are offended because the name of that publisher is on the book.

I don't understand what Adair means when he says that *Schindler's List* was shot like any other film. If he means that its techniques and visual values were crassly commercial, the point is severely arguable, beginning with the fact that, in an age insistent on color, Spielberg shot the film in black and white. Then there is the recurrent image in Adair's mind of Spielberg dressed as he usually dresses when working. This, of course, is a response to the fact that the film was made by a personality famous in popular culture. It makes me wonder whether Adair and similar critics would have liked *Schindler's List* better if, before shooting started, publicity photos had been distributed of Spielberg dressed somberly for work.

But it is Adair's comment on the cast that, I believe, is the base of all that troubles him and commentators like him. All his complaints rest ultimately on the issue that the film, though basically factual, was re-created by actors. Claude Lanzmann, who made *Shoah,* believes that re-creating the Holocaust is impermissible, "is tantamount to fabricating archives." I note that Marcel Ophuls, who made *The Sorrow and the Pity,* disagrees vehemently with Lanzmann; still, despite this welcome reassurance, let's investigate what I take to be the root causes underlying both Lanzmann's and Adair's views: causes that are present in all fictional Holocaust films but which,

FILMS WORTH SEEING

Carrington. *Jonathan Pryce as Lytton Strachey (bravo!) and Emma Thompson as Carrington (brava!!!) head a superb cast in Christopher Hampton's gleamingly intelligent account of an odd Bloomsbury romance. (Reviewed 12/4/95)* **Devil in a Blue Dress.** *A (mostly) black crime thriller in Raymond Chandler style. Best in its portrait of L.A. black life almost twenty years before Watts. (10/30/95)* **Les Misérables.** *Jean-Paul Belmondo, glorious at 62, in Claude Lelouch's mélange of Hugo and the twentieth century. Plenty of tasty bits in this ragout. (11/20/95)* **A Month by the Lake.** *A custardy 1937 English romance set in Italy. But see Vanessa Redgrave play tennis, dive, ride a motorcycle, all the while continuing to enchant. (10/23/95)*—**SK**

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

in a large-scale, lavishly promoted film—in what Adair says is "after all, a Hollywood film"—become most apparent and most abrasive: causes with a vivid history.

That history begins many centuries ago, with the first appearance in Western culture of a practice sufficiently formalized to be called acting, the profession of the actor. The earliest recorded criticism was adverse. Twenty-four hundred years ago Plato opined that mimesis, impersonation, was a danger to the state; and he has had many supporters in subsequent centuries. All through the chronicle of the theater, periods recurred when, under a political or religious or social aegis, the theater was attacked as a breeder of troubles. In a distinguished book called *The Anti-theatrical Prejudice,* Jonas Barish articulates the long record of this prejudice in the Western world. Let's content ourselves here with just one example, a famous one: in the eighteenth century, Rousseau, who had already achieved success as a playwright, turned bitterly against the theater as a source of moral imbalance.

Surely, what underlies this prejudice to a great degree is a factor that is not always emphasized: the power of the actor himself. Usually the objections focus on the contents of plays, sometimes on the very existence of the theater as an institution. Discernible throughout, however, even when the plays are pablum, is some fear of the art of acting.

In a penetrating study titled *The Actor's Freedom,* Michael Goldman says:

> Any playwright, actor, or director knows that aggression is an essential ingredient of drama. But not perhaps for the reasons familiarly proposed [conflict in the text of the play].... Rather, the importance of aggression has more to do with the aggression the actor himself must use to assume his role and maintain contact with his audience. The effort to set actors loose, to harness and encourage their terrific energies, requires ... an aggression that must be felt in every turn of dialogue, in every corner of the play.

If this thesis is credible, as I take it to be, such aggression is amplified in film, by technological and other means, to a degree that would have made Rousseau's hair curl.

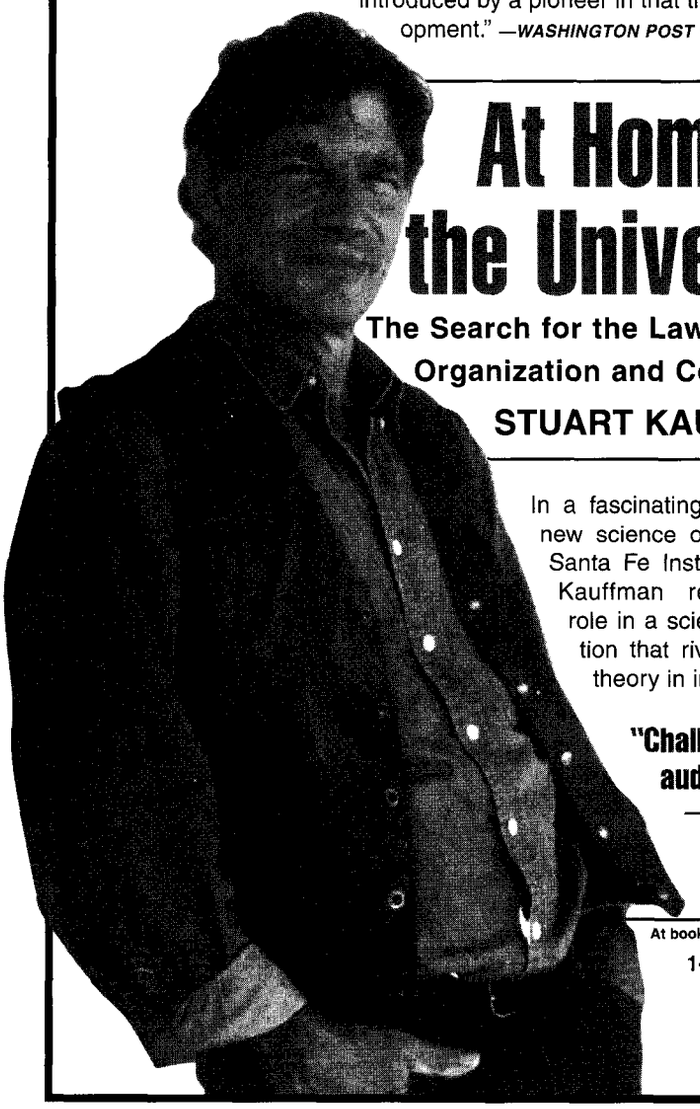
Indeed, the arrival of film in this century, its emplacement in human consciousness to such overwhelming effect, has greatly reduced the power of the theater actor's aggression—comparatively, at any rate. I am not arguing the superiority of one art, as such, over another: I don't accept such hierarchies. But in sheer numerical terms, let alone psychological or social ones, the sway of film has increased at the expense of the theater's sovereignty. Actors in the theater these days rarely achieve the mystical powers of many film actors, powers that are not necessarily identical with talent. The theater actor in our time is, in Goldman's sense, much less aggressive. Consequently, and I believe it is consequent, objections to plays about the Holocaust are rare.

When the Holocaust is the subject of a film, a re-created film, this resident power of the screen actor is even more disturbing than usual. The innate aggressiveness of the actor, which we might see as an emotional invasion for the purpose of conquest, seems even more invasive when it succeeds. To be moved by an actor practicing his or her profession by portraying a Holocaust victim can seem—before, during or after the event—obscene.

I underscore that I am not castigating *Schindler's List.* My opinion of the film is close to Lawrence L. Langer's. He notes that "some relics of Hollywood infiltrate" the film, but he says, "*Schindler's List,* like all serious art, invites us to join in the creative process by speculating about the riddle of human nature without expecting simple answers, or perhaps any answers at all." I am here trying to investigate not any "relics of Hollywood" in the film, but an inescapable component of *Schindler's List,* a component that, recognized or not, has been, I believe, a major factor in much

"**Every once in a while, you read a book so powerful and with such a radical view,** that you realize your world is changed forever. Monod's *Chance and Necessity* was one such; *At Home in the Universe* is another....**Kauffman shares his discovery with us, with lucidity, wit, and cogent argument, and we see his vision.**"—ROGER LEWIN

"**Offers a new and far-reaching theory of order in the universe,** introduced by a pioneer in that theory's development." —*WASHINGTON POST BOOK WORLD*



At Home in the Universe

The Search for the Laws of Self-Organization and Complexity

STUART KAUFFMAN

In a fascinating look at the new science of complexity, Santa Fe Institute's Stuart Kauffman recounts his role in a scientific revolution that rivals Darwin's theory in importance.

"Challenging and audacious."
—The Economist

At bookstores everywhere.
1-800-451-7556
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of the reproof it received. Plato would have recognized that factor: impersonation.

When we read a novel or a poem, no one obtrudes between what the author presents and what our response makes of it. In a film, much more imperially these days than in the theater, someone has learned words and rehearsed actions in order to enthrall us. In a Holocaust film, even if it is as close to fact as Spielberg's, someone is devising strategies for his or her own creative purposes. Elsewhere, in the general course of cinematic events, that can be an enrichment. Kenneth Branagh did more for the character of Henry V than most of us can do for ourselves by reading the play. But this enrichment can seem out of place in Holocaust material.

Further, there is our awareness of careers. When we see Actor A in a Holocaust film, unless he or she is a newcomer, we can see the performance as an event in Actor A's career, which would be normal and possibly pleasant in other roles but here can seem exploitative. When Ralph Fiennes appeared as the Nazi commandant in *Schindler's List*, he was completely unknown in the United States. For us, Fiennes began and ended with the Nazi commandant, thus—territorially, we might say—he seemed different from the other two leading actors. To see the film again now, after Fiennes has appeared in other pictures, is in some measure to see him in changed perspective.

The ideal in this regard is Falconetti as Joan of Arc in Dreyer's great film of 1927. Though she had been a working actress in the Paris theater, this was her first film, so world audiences had no mundane Falconetti appearances as background. She never made another film, thus Falconetti is fixed forever as martyr and saint, unsullied by career.

Compare that fact with what we know and knew about Liam Neeson and Ben Kingsley in Spielberg's film. Both of them had appeared in lesser films and most certainly have appeared in lesser films since. We may have admired their performances in *Schindler's List*, as I certainly did, but we couldn't help seeing them move ahead in the lives of Neeson and Kingsley. At the least, we laid on them, consciously or not, an obligation never to appear in any film of lesser seriousness than this one. When they did, as inevitably they had to, some of the public took it as a kind of betrayal, as a confirmation of the opportunism that they suspected in Spielberg's picture.

Thus it is, I believe, that in the paragraph cited earlier, Gilbert Adair finds *Schindler's List*, though better than he expected, nonetheless monstrous. The ancient discomfort with the actor's powers, the intrusiveness of impersonation, the use of the film as a professional stepping-stone for its makers, all these matters bother Adair—and others. Does this mean that there can never be a totally accepted fictional film—from Hollywood or some other famously commercial source—about the Holocaust? That it will be resisted whatever its quality? I think that this will probably be the case during the lifetimes of those who were contemporaries of the Holocaust or those whose close relatives and friends were involved in it.

I have to hope that no one will ever be able to look at the Holocaust with complete objectivity, but it will take several generations before audiences can confront re-creations of it as they confront a film on any profoundly grave subject. At such a time, the aggression of the actor in a Holocaust film will operate no more disturbingly than it usually does, without the immediate resentment and hurt that must so often intervene today. •

Jed Perl on Art

The Third Degree

Why is it that the critics who trumpet the death of painting, or even the end of art as we know it, rarely have anything dire to say about the state of sculpture? The apocalyptically minded could certainly find danger signs if they wanted to. A well-constructed new sculpture is much more of a rarity than a well-constructed new painting. And even in the galleries that are regarded as strong supporters of experimentation, works that hang on the wall not infrequently outnumber works that sit on the floor. Yet not a season goes by without somebody declaring that painting, at least painting that's any good, is going to disappear or has already disappeared. In some quarters there's a strong desire to dismiss all the painters, for simply by doing what they do they have resisted the modern principle of perpetual artistic change.

Painters are still working where they've always worked, which is up against the wall. The sculptors, meanwhile, have allowed themselves to be backed into quite a few corners, but any jam that they've found themselves in has been turned into yet another case of healthy experimentation. If sculpture remains the art that the trendwatchers feel most comfortable with, it's because sculptors have by and large accepted the avant-garde agitprop about being constantly on the move. Just when somebody might have thought to declare the death of sculpture, sculpture has slipped away and reinvented itself as a Primary Structure, a Specific Object, as Scatter Art, as something Site Specific, Environmental or Conceptual.

This season, like every other season, sculpture is in the news. There has been a much-talked-about show at PaceWildenstein of new work by Kiki Smith, who probably has the fastest-growing reputation of any contemporary American artist; and there are other shows of young-to-mid-career artists, among them Jessica Stockholder and Mel Kendrick, each of whom has turned sculpture inside out, apparently for no other reason than to keep people's attention. But this is not the half of it. If one needed to be reminded that sculpture's quick-change status is not exactly a recent development, there's Claes Oldenburg, who specializes in teaching old hats (and erasers and clothespins...) new tricks, with an exhibition called "An Anthology" that opened at the National Gallery in Washington last winter and is now at the Guggenheim in New York. Some may regard Oldenburg as a modern classic, but then where does that put Constantin Brancusi, who is the subject of a retrospective that opened in Paris last spring and is now at the Philadelphia Museum of Art? It would be nice to be able to say that Brancusi, a titan who died in 1957 at the age of 81, set modern sculpture on its way and is always there for those who'd like to get it back on track. But the truth is that Brancusi has nothing much to do with where sculpture is today, and to the extent that modern sculptors look to him they hopelessly misconstrue him.

Oldenburg, not Brancusi, is our founding father, a fact that will offer no comfort to museumgoers who, while taking in thirty-five years of work in a chronological ascent around Frank Lloyd Wright's spiral ramp, find that, artistically speaking, it's downhill all the way. The brusque, wayward charm that Oldenburg could achieve in 1960 and

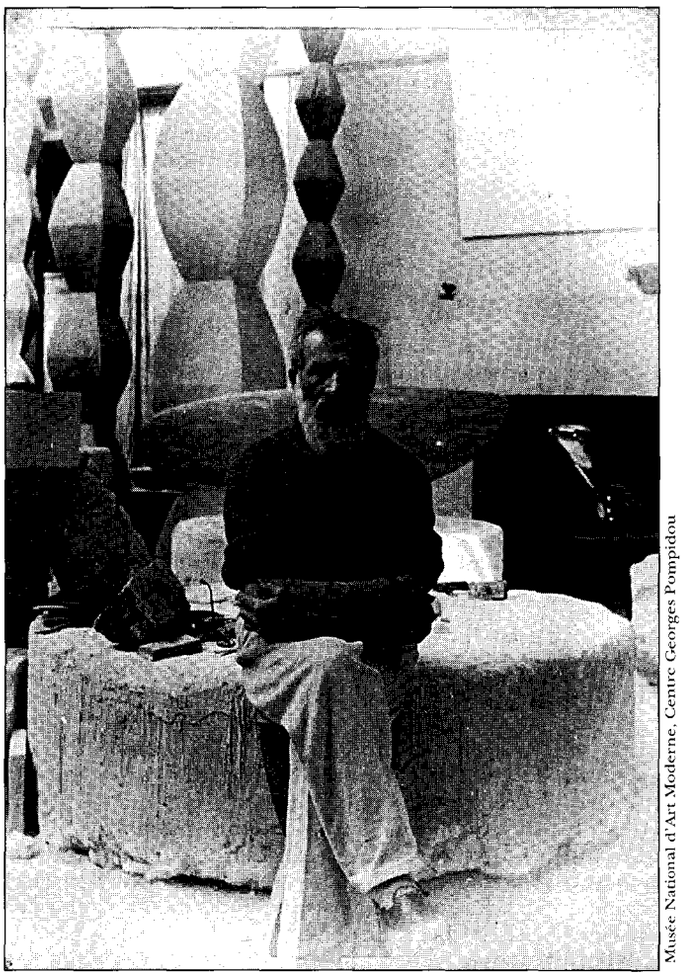
LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

1961 with some painted plaster replicas of cheap clothes and high-calorie desserts evaporated almost overnight. He's spent decades asserting ever larger claims for the same everyday subject matter that he first brought together in The Store that he set up in his studio on East 2nd Street in December 1961. The thought that you might make anything into high art literally by inflating it was a fair joke the first time, but does it bear repeating twice, not to mention hundreds of times?

Of course nobody expects subtlety from this cheerfully megalomaniacal artist. Everybody just wants Oldenberg to be himself, and that includes younger artists who look at his huge popular success and are encouraged to imagine that they, too, have a future north of 14th Street. He's a downtown boy who made it, and with the *Knife Slicing Through Wall* (done in 1986 and, like all the recent work, in collaboration with Coosje van Bruggen) he presents a kind of oversized polemical flourish that today's retro-conscious artists would do themselves if only they had the wherewithal. Near the top of the Guggenheim's ramp, this twelve-foot knife blade, made of plasterboard, sticks straight out of the wall, creating the impression that somebody has stuck a gigantic piece of cutlery into the gallery. *Knife Slicing Through Wall* is far too calculated to kick off a visceral, emotional reaction, but as an insider view of sculpture as contemporary aggressor its meaning is as unavoidable as a tabloid headline: ARTIST STABS MUSEUM.

Dadaist gestures are exactly what we expect from Oldenburg, who was labeled a neo-Dadaist when Pop Art was still a movement in search of a catchy name. Actually, he's remained more of a Neo-Dadaist than a Pop Artist; he's still basically wreaking variations on the transgressive potential of sculpture that Marcel Duchamp first defined in 1915, two years after he'd begun to put his name on store-bought objects and send them out into the world. Among these early Readymades were a bicycle wheel, a bottlerack, a urinal and a snow shovel. Duchamp's essential insight was that it would be easier to make anti-art out of sculpture than out of painting. Go up against painting and you were challenging the vigor of Impressionism and Postimpressionism, of Fauvism and Cubism. But go up against sculpture and all you were really doing was puncturing a lot of nineteenth-century hot air—all those rows of plaster casts of classical sculpture in the academies, all those dull bronze figures in all those city squares. The urinal sent up centuries of icy marbles; it pissed on the classical tradition.

Although the early Oldenburgs are domesticated Duchamps—homemade Readymades—in recent years Oldenburg has become a Corporate Dadaist. Like just about all high-profile contemporary sculpture, however, his work makes its bid for attention on the basis of a paradox, which is that Dadaism, having turned sculpture against sculpture, has brought sculpture to the fore. Sculpture has become the Other (it can be anything!) and it's popular for that very reason. Sculpture can be a friendly neighborhood Other, what arts organizations erect at outdoor sites for summer fun. As for sculptors who are in the limelight, they are almost invariably doing work that's thought to be interesting insofar as it is whatever it isn't expected to be.



Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou

SELF-PORTRAIT IN THE STUDIO, BY CONSTANTIN BRANCUSI (c. 1933-34)

And this season, what is sculpture not expected to be that it's being? Duchamp, who perhaps thought that painters deserved a bigger piece of the action, once observed that "since the tubes of paint used by the artist are manufactured and readymade products, we must conclude that all the paintings in the world are 'Readymades Aided.' " Well, at the Dia Foundation on West 22nd Street, sculpture is now a giant painting that's galloped off the wall.

Jessica Stockholder is the artist, and the very long title of her Dia installation is *Your Skin in this Weather Bourne Eye-Threads & Swollen Perfume.* Stockholder knows all the moves of the Oldenburg generation. She roughs up the big ground-floor Dia space with inexpensive materials—stacking crates, carpeting, electric cords—and then she pulls it all together with an intelligent feeling for abstract color and theatrical pacing and three-dimensional design. It takes some taste to arrange that huge pile of purple plastic crates near that salmon-colored wall, and it's nifty how the yellow extension cords run from each light socket on the ceiling into a gigantic heap of table lamps mounted on a platform to one side. But when Stockholder manipulates assemblagist conventions—and seventy-five years after Kurt Schwitters these *are* conventions—she treats them generically, almost academically. There's a blandness to the work; it lacks individualization, tension, point.

Stockholder is probably expecting us to do the emotional work for her, but then no sculptor who's achieved a big reputation in recent years seems prepared to take emotional responsibility. Everybody has adopted the Méret Oppenheim approach: line the teacup with fur and let the audience do the rest. Kiki Smith understands that all the teacups have already been lined with fur, and that by now the bad-old bronze figure, under the right conditions, is the newest thing around. In her show at PaceWildenstein on Greene Street, lumpish figures, mostly executed in bronze, hung or sat or stood in odd places, while a flock of dead birds, also in bronze, was scattered across the floor. It was symbolist salon art given a minimalist presentation.

Of course Kiki Smith has her carefully cultivated little quirks. In addition to the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

figures and birds, there were chains and charms and baubles hanging here and there. And her figures have names like *Lilith* and *Ice Man*, so that we get the idea that myths are being retold for our time. But her figure modeling, which is insecure to put it kindly, demonstrates no interest in the body except insofar as it can kick off wan sentimental-humanist thoughts in gallerygoers who've secretly hoped that art would come back around to their way of seeing things. It's the off-the-pedestals, topsy-turvy installation in a huge, white downtown space that gives this mawkish stuff its zing. In the late '60s, Robert Morris flung felt strips around a gallery and they called it Scatter Art. In the '90s, Kiki Smith dribbles bronze crows in a gallery and it's Eco-Feminist. A great deal of trouble probably went into casting all those crows, but the emotion was readymade.

Duchamp turns up in the background of the Brancusi retrospective in Philadelphia, or he does if you read Ann Temkin's catalogue essay on "Brancusi and His American Collectors." A central theme here is the strong advocacy of Brancusi by Duchamp, who was a key figure in the Franco-American avant-garde. Duchamp got American dealers and collectors interested, and that's in part why there are so many Brancusis in our museums. Temkin—the Curator of Twentieth Century Art in Philadelphia, who organized the show with Margit Rowell, Chief Curator of Drawings at the Museum of Modern Art—recounts an anecdote about Duchamp, Brancusi and Léger going to an aviation show in Paris. "Observing a shiny metal propeller," Temkin writes, "Duchamp allegedly asked Brancusi how any artist could possibly do better." I expect that Duchamp knew—and Brancusi knew that he knew—that a Brancusi *Bird in Space* was better. Then again Duchamp devoted a great deal of his life to work that begged the question of better and worse, or at least led people to believe that it did. The propeller is a red herring, but as a question that never seems to go away it detracts attention from the essential paradox of Brancusi's work, which is that his streamlined, erotically charged modern forms are grounded in a vehemently premodern, an almost medieval, sense of craft.

In Philadelphia the Brancusi show has been presented a little too coolly. The installation includes walls with translucent insets that are an intelligent attempt to echo the look of Brancusi's studio, and the low platforms on which the sculptures are arranged are certainly attractive. But it's all in such damn good taste that the show begins to look like one of those ads for Calvin Klein's new line of home products. There's an evenness to the pacing, a lack of surprise. Brancusi could do with a little showmanship. You should feel the light flashing off a *Bird in Space* as a direct, unmediated experience; you want to be awestruck, the way you are by a glimpse of an Alpine peak. Sculptured form is present in the world in a way that no form in a painting ever is; the Philadelphia installation pictorializes the work, sets it in a handsome, slightly grayed-down context, and that's no good. The bronze version of the *Blond Negress*, with its shimmering surfaces, is probably the most luxuriantly beautiful use of metal in the entire European tradition; it ought to flash out at us, with the blinding force of a tropical sun. In Philadelphia, the *Blond Negress* doesn't make enough of an impression; it's just an exquisite Parisian souvenir.

Although Brancusi lived in Paris for fifty years and entertained a long list of famous names in his Montparnasse studio, his achievement stands at a remove from that complicated, fast-moving period in European art. Matisse and Picasso could build on Cézanne and Seurat and Ingres and Delacroix; but for Brancusi, who arrived in Paris in 1904 at the age of 28, there was only the equivocal, high romantic example of Rodin, in whose studio he worked briefly. The profound connections that Brancusi established through his sculpture with India, Greece and Africa, do tie into a whole series of early twentieth-century interests in the archaic, the primitive, the non-Western and the naïve; but whereas Picasso and Matisse drew general conclusions about the nature of form and structure from farflung sources, Brancusi put everything he knew into singular, solitary objects. If Brancusi had no significant artistic parent figures, he has also probably had less impact on succeeding generations of sculptors than Picasso, who worked in three dimensions only part-time. Even those who really learned from Brancusi have tended to focus on his sense of quality rather than on his sense of form.

The seamless magic of Brancusi's greatest work is not unrelated to this paucity of ancestors and descendants. Perhaps because he worked on the same subjects or close variants for so long, Brancusi was able to cover his tracks completely, so that museumgoers don't find themselves working their way into the sculpture so much as they comprehend it at once. A Brancusi is a particularity that contains all generality. He's an idealist, a mystic. The various versions of the *Endless Column*, with their piled-high rhomboids, embody just about everything that Brancusi had to tell us about decorative rhythm, and that's a lot. The *Bird in Space* is his definitive statement on the gravity-defying power of stone carving at its greatest. *Nancy Cunard* and *Mademoiselle Pogany* are definitions of the Modern Woman. Brancusi, who by contemporary reports spent days on end polishing his bronzes and marbles, knew how to give them the irreducible and maybe unanalyzable force of natural wonders. The great Brancusis feel as if they've always existed, and it's in this sense that they recall such premodern monuments as Michelangelo's *Slaves*.

It's an artist's responsibility to help us see the masters in a contemporary way, and it's no surprise that a generation of artists trained to think in terms of context and environment has looked at the way that Brancusi set streamlined volumes on rough-and-ready wood bases and has frequently been more interested in the bases than in what they support. These bases do raise fascinating questions that lend themselves to traditional art-historical treatment. Brancusi tried different sculptures on different bases and documented his thinking in the beautiful photographs that he took of his studio and its contents. He also frequently sold sculptures without bases. At the Philadelphia Museum of Art even the most peculiar installation decisions, such as the wooden *Cup* that is mounted atop a *Column*, can be supported by Brancusi's own photographic record. But which photograph is one to believe, when Brancusi often arranged the same works differently at different times?

If you think about Brancusi's bases long and hard enough, you may find yourself getting into all sorts of subversive thoughts. Was Brancusi highlighting the pedestal because he was afraid that sculpture was losing its pedestals? Are the bases the key to a more contemporary Brancusi, a man who is troubled, insecure, maybe even baffled about how to position sculpture? It was Scott Burton, the artist who made a reputation for himself in the '80s with furniture that was meant to double as sculpture and became a staple in public spaces, who brought these questions into the open. In 1989, the year of his untimely death, Burton organized a show at the Museum of Modern Art called "Burton on Brancusi." Given that Brancusi had done benches and tables and stools—much of it for a site in his native Romania—Burton was certainly justified in pointing to him as an ancestor. Yet apparently Burton could not accept the possibility that for Brancusi, making a table or an arch

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

was no stranger than it had been for Bernini to make a fountain or a stairway three centuries earlier. In the brochure for his show, Burton insisted on renaming the bases of Brancusi's sculptures "pedestal-tables." The "pedestal-table," he said, is "an object simultaneously performing a function and acting as its own sign. It is a *usable* meditation on utilitarian form." Burton's thinking is fairly deft, if you like the when-is-a-table-not-a-table? kind of question. But does it really tell us anything about tables or about art?

Modern art was born amid a lot of woolly metaphysics, and it seems to be dying surrounded by more of the same. The difference is that while the early moderns tended to philosophize about the transcendent and the ideal, contemporary artists tend to philosophize about the working process, about what you'd think are the most basic facts of what they do. There is a kind of contemporary sculpture that in its all-in-one sense of form and its emphasis on the abstract value of natural materials might be thought to be Brancusian, but artists such as Martin Puryear and Richard Deacon bring to craft itself the same kind of willful complication that Scott Burton brought to the base. These artists are so intent on demonstrating their fascination with materials that they highlight every detail of joining and construction, so that the work loses whatever formal coherence it might have had.

Mel Kendrick, somewhat less well-known than Puryear or Deacon, is caught in the same confusions, and I mention his work because Kendrick has from time to time demonstrated a strong sculptural feeling that makes his chaotic show at the John Weber Gallery this November all the more disturbing. In his last exhibition at Weber, Kendrick sent a row of jagged wooden constructions that were raised off the floor on pieces of pipe straight down the center of the gallery, and they added up to a zany, engagingly rough-hewn futuristic fantasy. There's one work in the current show which, with a tree trunk raised aloft on more metal poles, does have something of that gangly, gravity-defying feel, but the rest of the show is just theorizing about sculpture, with tree trunks doubled by rubber castings of tree trunks, and castings turned inside out to show us how it's done.

Kendrick has taken modern sculpture apart, and I see no way on earth that he'll be able to put it back together. The Brancusian themes that are lodged somewhere in the depths of his mind have a lot to do with his occasional

ART SCENES *Galleries, Exhibits, and Events*

Private Art Dealers Association P.O. Box 872, Lenox Hill Station NYC, 10021, 212-741-7264. Not for profit membership organization comprised of over sixty Fine Art specialists. Appraisal Service for Charitable Donations and Probate Purposes. Membership directory available.

Robert Dance, Inc. 101 West 55th Street, NYC, 10019, 212-977-5612. By Appointment, Old Master Paintings and Drawings; Drawings available by: Cavalier d'Arpino, Zuccaro, Piola, Solimena, Marchesi, Cibo, many others.

Swann Galleries 104 East 25th Street, NYC, 10010, 212-254-4710. AUCTIONS: December 7: Maps & Atlases, Decorative Graphics, Ephemera; December 14: Modern Literature; January 11: Art & Architecture Books; January 25: Posters; February 1: Autographs. Please write or call for preview hours, quarterly newsletter with full auction schedule, and to purchase catalogues.

Matthew Marks Gallery 1018 Madison Avenue, NYC, 212-861-9455. Tuesday through Saturday, 10-5:30. *Brice Marden* on view through January 14, 1996, at 522 West 22nd Street, NYC, 243-1650; Thursday through Sunday, 12-6.

Mimi Ferzt Gallery 114 Prince Street, NYC, 10012, 212-343-9377. Monday-Sunday, 11 a.m.-6 p.m. *Dmitri Plavinsky: Echo Ancient Ruins.* November 17 through December 8. An installation by Russian artist Dmitri Plavinsky, synthesizes the artist's impressions of ancient Greek culture. The centerpiece of the exhibition is an installation of the ancient palace of Knossos, located on the island of Crete, the cradle of Greek civilization. It serves as a visual index by which to view the entire exhibition. Color catalogue available.

Jill Newhouse—Drawings and Watercolors 12 East 86th Street, NYC, 10028, *by appointment* 212-249-9216. Specializing in master drawings and watercolors of all periods. Catalogues available. Artwork bought and sold.

Forum Gallery 745 Fifth Avenue at 57th Street, NYC, 10151, 212-355-4545. Tuesday through Saturday, 10-5:30. *Kent Bellows: Current Works* features six of his newly completed works, including paintings and drawings. The unique combination of raw power and incredible detail in the work of Kent Bellows has attracted interest from major museums and collectors. The artist's limited output makes this exhibition an eagerly anticipated highlight of the New York Art Season. November 9 through December 16.

Anita Shapolsky Gallery 99 Spring Street, NYC, 212-334-9755. Wednesday through Saturday, 11-6; Tuesday by appointment. *The Fifties* features nineteen artists working in the abstract expressionist tradition. Each artist contributes a unique voice to the body of work that reconfirms the importance of abstract expressionism's poetic, spiritual place in the history of art. November 11 through January 6.

Art Scenes is a regular advertising service of *The New Republic* featuring art news and announcements. For further information or space reservations, please **contact** Jennifer Barrett at 202-331-7494. **Mail** your listing to: *Art Scenes, The New Republic*, 1220 19th Street, NW, Washington, DC 20036. Or **fax** the listing to 202-223-0566.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

bursts of energy, but mostly he seems to want to deconstruct Brancusi. Apparently Brancusi is of no help to anybody right now; he's thoroughly misunderstood. In 1989, Burton wrote that "Brancusi's enlargement of the nature of the art object is as original as Duchamp's new kind of object, the Readymade." This is the kind of ludicrous compliment that is now being paid to a supremely intuitive artist. Burton is telling us that what Brancusi did with a piece of oak bears comparison to a store-bought snow shovel. Burton isn't praising Brancusi—he's giving him the third degree. How long is it going to take people to get over the idea that every three-dimensional object that's set in a gallery not only has to have a theoretical subtext, but has to have that subtext revealed, turned inside out?

Leonardo Da Vinci, perhaps the most intellectual artist who ever lived, showed a grudging comprehension of his arch-rival Michelangelo, when he wrote in his *Treatise on Painting* that "the sculptor in creating his work does so by the strength of his arm." Leonardo went on to say that sculpture "is done by most mechanical exercise, often accompanied by great sweat"; he offered a picture of a sculptor so covered with marble dust that "he looks like a baker." Duchamp has often been compared to Leonardo—they're both slow-working, thought-provoking artists—and although Duchamp is surely no Leonardo, he must have regarded the marble-dust-covered Brancusi as a spirit as alien to him as Michelangelo was to Leonardo. In one of his sonnets, Michelangelo wrote that "The best of artists never has a concept/ A single marble block does not contain/Inside its husk." To carve was to release the concept, to achieve something spiritual through plain hard work. Today's sculptors may not be afraid of hard work, but a lot of them are afraid of the absolutely physical nature of the sculptor's art. They spin theories around sweat and plaster dust. One of the glories of Brancusi's work is that it makes you stop thinking. You just love it. It's that simple. •

The Unquiet Englishman

BY MICHAEL LEVENSON

Graham Greene: The Enemy Within
by Michael Shelden

(Random House, 454 pp., $27.50)

The Life of Graham Greene
Volume II: 1939-1954
by Norman Sherry

(Viking, 562 pp., $34.95)

Five hundred words each day were what he often said he wanted to write, and whether it's readerly fantasy or not, the novels often seem to divide into these bits of daily prose manufacture, so that you count off 500 words from the beginning of a chapter and persuade yourself that *there,* with that fine phrase, he called it a day, and went to mix a drink. It's not a large output on any given morning in Capri, with no bankers barking, no children weeping; it doesn't compare to the surging production of words by his cherished Trollope. But much of what made him Graham Greene was that dogged daily duty of staying alive as a writer, and while others dried up or died, he published his way to fame.

It would be tempting to call this daily regime a professionalism, which of course it was, if it weren't also so clearly a psychic tic, a ritual, even a superstition, as if, not knowing what else to do with his life, he did 500 words. Graham Greene surely vies for the title of "greatest British novelist of the middle twentieth century." So many of the novels survive in print, and several of their portentous titles, *The Power and the Glory* (1940), *The Heart of the Matter* (1948), *The End of the Affair* (1951), still ring out the sound of literary seriousness. His every recorded word seems now to have tumbled into publication, his film reviews, speeches and interviews, his dream diary.

But for all that success, bringing fame, money, prizes and sex, Greene saw his life as a string of failures. This was no affectation. He wrote several early novels, rankly profuse with badness. It took him years before he had readership and confidence, and even then he had the bad luck to release *The Power and the Glory* in wartime, so that it wasn't until the late '40s, after he had been writing novels for twenty years, that he took on the look of a "major figure." And even when it all finally came, the critical acclaim, the reliable readership, the celebrity, Greene never believed in it. Success for a writer, he said, "is always temporary, success is only a delayed failure. And it is incomplete." If you could expend such hopeful energy on a novel like *The Name of Action* (1930), only to realize that it was a shuddering embarrassment, then you would always fear that any book could turn into an ashy humiliation.

Beyond Greene's sense that failure always lies in wait even for gleamingly successful books, there is the other, still more bitter feeling that his life was a failure, that it never got over its weakness: what he once spoke of as its wriggling "miserableness." For Norman Sherry, now two-thirds of the way through his authorized life of Greene, the deepest note of that life is "sad," sad because it was driven helplessly by uncontrollable forces: his sexuality, his depression, his guilt, which together reflect "a deep-seated personal disturbance . . . a kind of plague spot." For Michael Shelden, Sherry's great competitor, who has given the whole story in one volume, the guiding word is "bad," and it is the badness of a cunning operator, anything but helpless, who spent his life seeking sordid pleasure behind the curtain of respectability, and who now after death still benefits from the promotion of misguided defenders.

Taken together, the two books add a mass of information to the record, but far from solving the Greene problem, they have made it worse. Ever since the slanging match between Sherry and Shelden in a London bookstore, we have been stumbling through a difficult Greene year. As the biographies have appeared, they have agitated a settled reputation, and more than that, more than the struggle between "sad" and "bad," helpless and cunning, they have stirred up some painful questions.

Greene often said that his unhappiness at Berkhamsted School was the key to his difficult personality and his literary character. Whenever he thought back to the experience, he remembered the coarse group of taunting schoolmates and the cruel deceptions of friendship. As the headmaster's son and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Where We Stand

By Albert Shanker, President
American Federation of Teachers

Parents Under Contract

Charter schools, like vouchers, are being marketed in part as a last-ditch effort to spur reform in public education. Under laws passed in 19 states so far, parents, teachers, nonprofit groups, and others can apply to establish new public schools or remake existing schools outside the regular system, usually with the stated purpose of realizing a vision for better teaching and learning. The idea is that these experimental schools, funded by tax money but freed from state and local regulation, will show other public schools by example how to create successful learning communities for all children—especially those with the greatest educational needs.

Charter schools are, in effect, imposing entrance requirements on the basis of family accountability.

Charter school proponents are quick to draw attention to the importance of their movement for disadvantaged youngsters. A recent national newsletter about charters says enrollments are "skewed toward at-risk students, not the elite." In California—which passed its charter school law in 1992 and now has some 80 approved charters, more than any other state—the authorizing legislation says one purpose of the schools is "to increase learning opportunities for all students, with special emphasis on expanded learning opportunities for pupils who are defined as academically low achieving."

But researchers Henry J. Becker and Kathryn Nakagawa of the University of California at Irvine and Ronald G. Corwin of the Southwest Regional Laboratory discovered a rather different story when they were collecting data for a large-scale study on autonomy and innovation in California charter schools. In looking at the schools' strategies for involving parents, the researchers found a pattern of practices that seemed certain to discourage many parents (parents of the children who most need help) by setting strict rules about their participation.

There's nothing wrong with expecting parents to participate. Everyone knows that parental time regularly spent reading to children, engaging them in conversation and storytelling, and helping with homework makes an enormous difference. The California charter law even calls for parental involvement in school governance. But the charter schools don't just invite all interested parents to play a role. They set formal, legalistic requirements for ongoing parental participation in school activities. Most schools spell out what they expect from parents in a written "contract" and many go so far as to specify penalties—including expulsion—for a parent's failure to meet the required obligations. For example:

"I will participate in monthly meetings. If I am unable to attend, I will work four hours of additional service or pay a fine of $20 for each such meeting. I am aware that I cannot miss more than three meetings.... If I do not meet this requirement, I understand that my daughter/son will not be able to continue attending this school." Another contract states: "Any student accepted on an above-mentioned agreement will meet a prescribed written contract and will understand, if the contract is broken, said agreement will be revoked and the student will be disenrolled."

The contracts by and large are a one-way street. Parents agree to fulfill commitments to, for example, support school codes at home, guarantee their child's attendance, help with homework, keep a log of their involvement, and put in a specific amount of volunteer time at the school. But the schools' side of the bargain typically is limited to general statements pledging to maintain a positive school climate (with one exception: the contracts usually commit teachers to communicate frequently with parents and send them specific plans for how to help with homework!). The contract must be signed by the parent but it seldom requires the signature of a school representative.

The result of this elaborate admissions machinery? Contrary to the language of the California law, the charters studied enroll smaller proportions of minority, low-income, limited-English-proficient, and below-grade-level students than the nearby public schools the charter students otherwise would have attended. The parent contract serves as a kind of sorting device. The schools are not simply encouraging a learning partnership with parents; they are, in effect, imposing entrance requirements on the basis of family accountability. Children whose parents are scared off by the contract's tone, or don't have the time to volunteer, or can't read, or don't understand what is being asked won't be enrolling in one of these schools. Nor will children who lack a caring parent or guardian.

Trying to draw parents into the task of helping children learn is obviously a worthy aim. And these charter schools are making a conscious effort to incorporate parents into the educational program for the good of the children. But child development is not the issue here; the issue is what kinds of families get to send their children to charter schools.

Charter schools are held up as beacons of hope for all children in an otherwise bleak education landscape. It is dismaying, then, to find the reality is that charter schools don't want children who might be, as the California researchers put it, "the least desirable to teach."

For a copy of "Parent Involvement Contracts in California's Charter Schools," send $6.95 to Southwest Regional Laboratory, 4665 Lampson Ave., Los Alamitos, Calif. 90720 (Attn: Elva Ramirez).

Mr. Shanker's comments appear in this ad under the auspices of the American Federation of Teachers. Reader correspondence is invited. Address your letters to Mr. Shanker at the AFT, 555 New Jersey Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20001. © 1995 by Albert Shanker.

ADVERTISEMENT

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a shy lisping misfit among a gang of boys, he knew himself to be living out an impossibility: impossible to conform to school authority, but impossible to revolt with conviction. An unrelenting bully abused him; a single close friend betrayed him. His adolescent road narrowed into an impasse, until he broke down, leaving Berkhamsted to enter an early form of psychoanalytic therapy in London, an experience that gave him the resources to return to school, but that also, he claimed, left him with a bottomless boredom that would haunt him for the rest of his life.

From this early point, Greene held a corrosive skepticism toward groups, movements, schools and tendencies. From 1904 to 1991 he moved through the length of our century, missing just that small bit at the start and then this last odd piece, here at the end. But what is curious, now that his life and career are over, is to see how elusively he skipped through the heavy moments that might have formed him.

The hard literary revolt of the '20s—Joyce and Woolf, Proust and Pound—left only soft traces on his writing. Greene never shared the pursuit of technical innovation, and he could never muster belief in a new religion of modern art, or in a warrior modernism that would defeat a corrupt society and renovate a moribund culture. While others dreamed of an aesthetic redemption of the world, Greene wondered, with usefully dull practicality, whether he could afford to quit his position as a subeditor on *The Times* and make a living out of novel-writing.

If in the '20s he kept aloof from the aesthetic carnival, in the '30s, when aesthetics turned to politics, Greene still marked his distance, traveling far from the European vortex, making long difficult journeys, first to Africa and then to Mexico, which became the subjects of those unfairly neglected travel books, *Journey Without Maps* (1936) and *The Lawless Roads* (1939). When the war came, he saw it as the fit end to a corrupt civilization: "The world we live in could not have ended any other way," and this is why "one feels at home in London . . . or any of the bombed cities—because life there is what it ought to be. If a cracked cup is put in boiling water it breaks, and an old dog-toothed civilization is breaking now." He joined the intelligence service and was sent to west Africa. But even there, where he nominally joined the campaign to save that dog-toothed civilization, it's clear that his intelligence work in Sierra Leone served the purposes of his fantasy life more than it served the war cause.

For Shelden, Greene's intelligence work is the largest key to his personality, and in bizarre ways it becomes an incitement to Shelden's own biographical espionage. Taking the astonishingly crude view that "like all good literature, Greene's work is a code for readers to decipher," Shelden plays cipher-breaker, teasing out elaborate, poorly substantiated hypotheses of sexual kinkiness and political treachery, as if there weren't enough right on the surface. Nothing is innocent in this guilty life. Everything is a prod to surmise, speculation, innuendo. The index to Shelden's book contains the comically revealing entry, "possible actual homosexuality," and much of the book's sensationalism depends on loose speculation as to what may possibly have actually happened.

You find the opposite (but no more satisfying) motive in Sherry's approach to the task, which is to plump firmly for description at the expense of interpretation, almost as if he would be willing to give up understanding Greene if only he could conjure the dead face. The wistful final sentences of Sherry's book, with their strong echo of Conrad's *Lord Jim*, give the memory of a night in Antibes when the two parted: "and as the twilight ebbed fast I watched him silently walk away, becoming a dark speck, until finally I lost him." To gaze longingly toward the elusive detachment of an "odd and brilliant" man: this is Sherry's vocation, pursued over two decades, even as Greene made sure that he would remain a darkly receding speck.

GRAHAM GREENE BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

Nothing seems older or more instinctive in Greene than the urge to keep himself for himself, to abstain from the enthusiasms of the many or the few. Famously he wrote that "there is a splinter of ice in the heart of a writer," and throughout his life he wielded the icy splinter to cut away the claims of other people. The line that Woolf borrowed from Cowper, "We perish each alone"—this might have been the epigraph to Greene's corpus, which aims so unrelentingly at the agony of the mortal self, left alone to worry out its fate. It's not that Greene was a solipsist; he felt fully and richly the painful lives of others. In the end, however, he saw distance inside every intimacy, and constantly receded into "the worst cell of all, oneself."

His one strong embrace of authority, his conversion to Catholicism, was at the same time a brazen act of rebellion—against his family, against what he took as the spirit of his age. Even as he found himself classed with Evelyn Waugh as a "Catholic novelist" and as his work drew the fascinated attention of theologians, he began to make subtle insurrection against his church, insisting often, but not always persuasively, that he was "not

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a Catholic writer but a writer who happens to be a Catholic." In *A Sort of Life* (1971), he tells the story of an old priest who, when asked to present arguments for the existence of God, has to admit that he has forgotten them. "I have suffered the same loss of memory," writes Greene. "I can only remember that in January 1926 I became convinced of the probable existence of something we call God, though now I dislike the word with all its anthropomorphic associations . . . I cannot be bothered to remember—I accept." A "Catholic atheist" is what he came to call himself.

Still, however fitful the faith, and whether or not it brought him personal solace, Greene's conversion gave him a stage and a plot. The stage is all of life beyond the reach of worldly happiness, outside the canopy of the therapeutic age, life "under the stone." The plot is the stumble of the "maimed and warped" through sin toward grace; at its most controversial, it is the story of a willing caress of sin that becomes a way of rousing faith. So of *Brighton Rock* (1938), which begins his major, middle phase, Greene insisted that it criticized worldly values of right and wrong from the spiritual standpoint of good and evil. As spiritually suffering Rose says of mundanely happy Ida: "the world's all dandy with her. . . . She couldn't burn if she tried." Rose and her murderous Pinkie meet down "in the hole" unknown to those shallow seekers after easy pleasure and moral virtue, and "in the hole were murder, copulation, extreme poverty, fidelity and the love and fear of God." What keeps *Brighton Rock* so formidable, when other "challenging" works of modernism have grown tame, is that it refuses to confirm any humanist value. It treats fairness and decency, justice and happiness as just so many empty lures. In the spirit of this anti-humanism, Scobie says in *The Heart of the Matter*: "Point me out the happy man and I will point you out either extreme egotism, evil—or else an absolute ignorance."

Whether these are the words of a Catholic or a Catholic atheist, they are hard words. They savagely deflate the pursuit that animates most modern lives, the blunt quest for a better world, for more happiness, for a just society. The lieutenant in *The Power and the Glory*, chasing the last priest through the ravaged villages of Mexico, cheers himself with the thought of what he might do for the children set free from faith:

> He would eliminate from their childhood everything which had made them miserable, all that was poor, superstitious, and corrupt. They deserved nothing less than the truth—a vacant universe and a cooling world, the right to be happy in any way they chose.

For the Greene of those remorseless novels from *Brighton Rock* to *The End of the Affair*, the lieutenant's vision might stand for all worldly vision fatally lost in pursuit of happiness. It is remarkable that these books can still engage so many of us, who can hardly imagine what it would mean to abandon hope for a life in which people have the right to choose their happiness.

It's not clear that Greene himself, in his life outside the books, could bear this vision any better than we can. To hold that the evil soul is close to the saint, that there is beauty in vileness, that the sinner is closer to God than the merely virtuous citizen—these are dangerous propositions to live by, especially when you no longer remember how you once believed. From the evidence accumulating in these two biographies, it seems clear that Greene's theology often conspired with his temperament, quickening the urge to do evil and even to cause pain. The most chilling moments in both biographies come in the remarks of Vivien Greene, who spoke to Sherry in the late '70s and early '80s and to Shelden a decade later, and who abandoned any attempt to spare her husband from the working of her rage. Harking back to wounds of decades before, she exposes his sexual indulgence and mocks his faith.

The failure of the marriage, the visits to prostitutes, the long romance with Dorothy Glover, the wild passion for Catherine Walston, the neglect of the children, the harsh words, the opium: these are enough to destroy enough any reputation. A letter of 1948 to Vivien, quoted by Sherry, proves that Greene was feeding on his own entrails long before the vultures arrived.

> . . . mainly through my fault, we have lived for years too far from reality, & the fact that has to be faced dear is that by my nature, my selfishness, even in some degree by my profession, I shall always, & with anyone, have been a bad husband. I think, you see, my restlessness, moods, melancholia, even my outside relationships, are symptoms of a disease & not the disease itself, & the disease, which had been going on ever since my childhood & was only temporarily alleviated by psycho-analysis, lies in a character profoundly antagonistic to ordinary domestic life. Unfortunately the disease is also one's material. Cure the disease & I doubt whether a writer would remain. I daresay that would be all to the good.

Here Sherry intervenes to say that

"An absolutely fascinating book [that] will shock and take one's breath away."
—Ramon Gutierrez, author of *When Jesus Came, the Corn Mothers Went Away*

SEX AND CONQUEST

Gendered Violence Political Order, and the European Conquest of the Americas

RICHARD C. TREXLER

A major original contribution to historical discussions of sexual behavior in the late Middle Ages and the early modern period."
—James A. Brundage, University of Kansas

"A persuasive *tour de force* of deserted histories."
—Gerald Vizenor, author of *Manifest Manners*

In this dazzling book on the relation between force and sex in our social and political lives, historian Richard C. Trexler vividly depicts male sexual culture in Europe and America at the time of the Conquest. He focuses on the berdaches, Native American males who lived as women.

11 illustrations $29.95
At bookstores, or call (607) 277-2211

Cornell
UNIVERSITY PRESS
Sage House • 512 East State Street
Ithaca, NY 14850

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Greene is being unfair to himself, since as a long-term sufferer from depression his "disease was genuine." No doubt it was. But we can still feel that Greene's self-loathing was a better response than Sherry's academic lenience, which benignly sees a symptom in place of a moral failure. Sherry is a paragon of diligence, who, when he can, will count the number of oysters swallowed at a given meal and measure out the pints of Guinness. In a prologue to this second volume he recalls a moment alone with his subject on a railway platform at Tunbridge Wells, when Greene mentioned hearing that his wife was going to publish a book about their marriage and then, eerily, broke into song: "Shovel the dust on the old man's coffin and take up your pen and write." Although Sherry doesn't acknowledge it, one can only see this as Greene making a desperate appeal for biographical generosity, which Sherry certainly heeds. The recovery of detail, not the assertion of judgment, is his consuming motive. Where another writer would have questioned the decency of an action, Sherry shows instead how it was a source for a novel.

Shelden is that other querying writer, for whom detail is always in the service of quick judgment. For him, "Graham Greene" is the name of an odious collection of human vices, cloaked and disguised by the cunning of the writer and his friends, but now, through the efforts of the tireless unblinkered biographer, glaringly exposed for all to see. Shelden's Greene is a treacherous, spying, leering, homosexuality-suppressing hypocrite—a nasty compound of weak moral character and "bad genes."

What makes Shelden's accusations so pointlessly hollow is that Greene accused himself long before. It's absurd to suppose that he erected a sleek classical statue of himself which requires a Shelden to topple. To a cheery, chatty question of an interviewer in the early '80s—why is escape such a persistent motif in his writing?—Greene had given a forthright response: "Because I don't like myself."

Shelden doesn't like him either. But how excited should we be that a zealous raker of muck has clawed with complacent extravagance at what Greene admitted quietly: that he was a weak creature, who too easily followed the call of pleasure, a cruel husband, a neglectful father, a sometime lush, a smoker of opium, a secret man who "betrayed a great number of things and people in the course of my life?" Then Shelden comes along and shouts, worse!, worse still!

And indeed it was worse, which is why Shelden's book can't just be thrown aside. As exasperating, as appalling, as the book can be, it has the terrible virtue of its defects. Its account of Greene's anti-Semitism, for example, is relentless and devastating. Through the '30s, from *The Name of Action* to *The Confidential Agent*, when Greene needed a figure for moral poison, he reached for the Jew. The latter novel displays the wealthy Mr. Forbes with the "domed Semitic forehead," a duplicitous businessman, who with his "tired sad sensuality" likes to doodle "little Aryan faces"; he has changed his name, but "the shape of the skull disclosed the Furtstein past." Published in 1939, the book comes too far down the slope of the decade to have such racism set aside as just the casual reflex of the Jew-mocking British gentleman. Faced with such moral ooze, Shelden insists on the foulness of the man, and though his book is excessive in almost every way, it has the power of its doggedness. After Shelden, there seems little point in trying to wriggle out of the conclusion. But now that we know, what do we know? Certainly not how to parse neatly the moral vice and the literary virtue.

However bad he was, Greene wasn't simply bad, because he wasn't simple. Here is Norman Sherry with access to the manic correspondence Greene conducted with Catherine Walston, and here is Michael Shelden with the glimmerings he extracted from intelligence sources, and all you need to is to put them together in order to discover that putting them together is no help at all. Greene makes no whole. Nor did he want the much-advertised pleasures of coherence: "To find an 'integrated' person," he bitingly said, "one would have to look in a lunatic asylum."

You might say that Greene kept himself out of the asylum by nourishing what he called his "restlessness," his "desire to be a spectator of history." It's an odd phrase, this last one, that cuts both ways, suggesting the deep double thrust of detachment and engagement. From the '30s onward, Greene placed himself in one scene of public cataclysm after another—Vietnam, Kenya, Haiti, Panama—where he watched history and watched himself watching. To reread *The Quiet American* (1955) is to feel how astonishingly sharp the book is about the American fall from innocence in Vietnam, and in the same moment to feel the self-lacerating torment of the one who glimpses that political truth. It's as if he wanted to get as close as possible to the surge and swell outside the self, only to recover again and again the final, essential separation. Like Jean Genet, with whom his career shares many parallels, Greene came late to an interest in politics, and soon discovered that politics could become a new, more elaborate way to concentrate upon himself.

Depressed, guilty, angry, lusty, ice-splintered, Greene is a torment to any biographer who wants to shore his fragments against his ruin. To the rest of us, who don't have the biographical burden, the most striking thing is not the scrabbly incoherence of his life, but what happens in the writing. To go back to that long series of novels and stories is to watch again the discovery of a vocation. Out of the sorry mess of a personal history, Greene invented a view of the world and, just as impressively, a tone of voice. Take this passage from *The Power and the Glory*, where the last priest flees back to his old parish, where he prayed and sinned.

> Five years ago he had given way to despair—the unforgivable sin—and he was going back now to the scene of his despair with a curious lightening of the heart. For he had got over despair too. He was a bad priest, he knew it: they had a word for his kind—a whiskey priest—but every failure dropped out of sight and out of mind: somewhere they accumulated in secret—the rubble of his failures. One day they would choke up, he supposed, altogether, the source of grace. Until then he carried on, with spells of fear, weariness, with a shamefaced lightness of heart.

In book after book you come again to the astonishing evenness of tone, free of verbal bauble, precise, composed, almost flat, and yet capable of registering blank horror. It's what these biographies both miss in the avid pursuit of their volatile subject; they miss Greene's ability to rise out of the muck and to find his way back to the steady unbroken sound. He traveled, he drank, he prowled, he betrayed, he loathed others, and more deeply loathed himself, but still he could wake in any hotel room, bend over a page and recover a balance inside language. You don't have to believe that a bad life is redeemed by good prose in order to quicken with respect for the achievement.

For all the perfunctory nods to Greene's talent, Shelden shows no sign of such quickening, and yet, of the two biographies, his is the provocation that must be met. This is not because he weakens our admiration for the man Greene, the man having already done that; it's because in his work there can be seen the sign of a bitter and windy

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

quarrel between journalism and literature, the struggle between an aggressive demand for revelation and an artist's instinct, well acknowledged by Greene, "to remain in ignorance of oneself and to forget easily." Can anyone doubt which way the balance is tipping these days?

Shelden hunts Greene the way the lieutenant in *The Power and the Glory* hunts the whiskey priest, and for many of the same reasons—reasons of decency, justice, citizenship. His book belongs to this new Age of Scrutiny, and it shows the special dangers posed by a moralizing suspicion to the career of imagination. We know what withering scrutiny can do to the lives of public officials, but there is another kind of harm done by the snarling indignation at the moral failures of the artist. This is not a point about Helms and Mapplethorpe. For the snarl has no party identity; it's the snarl of what you may call moral journalism, as long as you see this as not so much the name of a writing profession as a name for our culture—a culture of public trials and knowing spectators.

You needn't see the vocation of art as a wound, a curse or a madness in order to recognize that it's bound to be a risky vocation, and that it can bring life-searing loss. They don't just drop from the sky, the good rhythms and the crisp shapes; they often require that you live alone with your broody self, that you dislocate the usual patterns of affection, that you slyly, selfishly disengage your responsibilities. Greene never pretended that he could justify such a life. He only insisted, shruggingly, that it was the inevitable scene of his creative labor. He paid a high price for his disengagement, and Shelden has come to collect the debt. Now we can cluck our tongues at the bad citizen and lash the hideous corpse. But then it's so easy to have opinions and so hard to write a sentence that counts.

MICHAEL LEVENSON teaches English at the University of Virginia and is the author of *A Genealogy of Modernism* (Cambridge University Press).

Captain Kirk

BY EUGENE D. GENOVESE

The Sword of Imagination: Memoirs of a Half-Century of Literary Conflict by Russell Kirk

(William B. Eerdmans, 497 pp., $35)

When Russell Kirk died last year at the age of 76, America lost one of its most respected intellectuals and strongest conservative voices. Just before he died, Kirk completed his memoirs. They provide a delightful account of his extraordinary and idiosyncratic life, and a valuable introduction to his voluminous writings—essays, reviews and thirty books, on John Randolph of Roanoke, Edmund Burke, T. S. Eliot, the Constitution, political theory and much else.

Kirk's reputation was launched in 1953 with the appearance of *The Conservative Mind*, which has gone through edition after edition and continues to serve the conservative movement as an exposition of principles and a history of ideas. Kirk conceived *The Conservative Mind* as "a lesson in normative Politics," which would "open eyes to a central concept of politics, not born yesterday, by which the claims of freedom and the claims of order may be kept in healthy tension, avoiding extremes." He was especially influenced by Burke, who provided a kind of baseline for the discussion of conservative principles, and a wide array of British and American conservative thinkers.

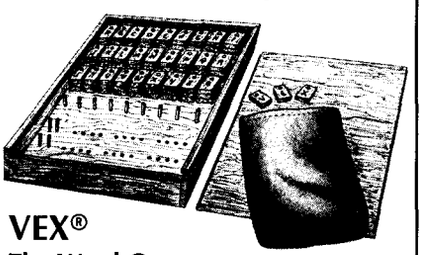
In the final chapter of his memoir—called "Is Life Worth Living?"—Kirk describes the three ends that he sought in his life: to defend "Permanent Things"; "to lead a life of decent independence, living much as his ancestors had lived"; and "to marry for love and to rear children who would come to know that the service of God is perfect freedom." Kirk accomplished what he set out to do. And yet he never reified "permanent things." He wished to guide change, not to prevent it. He made his share of errors in judgment, notably his stubborn refusal to appreciate the centrality of slavery to the development of Southern conservative thought. Still, he could fairly say of himself that, on balance, he

A Perfect Gift for
Word Lovers

"Within five minutes of opening a VEX I had ordered for a gift, I was on the phone to order another. What a beautifully crafted game!"
—*New Republic* reader, Boston

"Excellent game!"—*Atlantic Monthly* reader, San Francisco

"I very much enjoyed playing VEX, which I gave as a Christmas present to some friends. Now, I want one!!"
—*New Republic* reader, Maine



VEX®
The Word Game
ALL WOOD: case, 107 tiles, score pegs
100% cotton burgundy tile bag
Made in Vermont *VISA, MC, check, or m.o.*
Free brochure avail. $44.95 + $5 s/h
VEX is a reg. trademark of Wood-on-Brook Games
1-800-789-GAME

PUBLISH YOUR BOOK
At A Price You Can Afford!
$1.97 EACH Size: 5½"x 8½", 64 pgs, 500 copies, 2-color cvr. Negs, Proofs, Perf Bd.
From $529. Write for Price List.
800-277-8960 PROFESSIONAL PRESS
P.O. Box 3581 • Chapel Hill, NC 27515-3581

RAVEN MAPS & IMAGES
The Holiday Gift Solution
Beautiful Wall Maps
■ FREE CATALOG ■
Tel: 800-237-0798 Fax: 503-773-6834

AUDIO BOOKS
• *Rentals by mail*
• *All Unabridged*
• *Huge Selection*
• *100% Guarantee*
BLACKSTONE AUDIO BOOKS
Dept. NE • P.O. Box 969 • Ashland OR 97520
For a **FREE** Catalogue, Write or Call:
1-800-729-2665

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

was "more skeptical of Rationalism than of Tradition." For Kirk never let his skepticism draw him into irrationality. Throughout his life he defended a living "tradition" while eschewing a dead "traditionalism."

In *The Sword of Imagination*, Kirk writes of himself in the third person, in the Henry Adams manner; and the tricky device works. These memoirs might easily have become pompous and stilted, but they radiate the charm of a man at peace with himself. As his title suggests, Kirk extolled "imagination" in politics as well as in literature. He directed his most biting criticism of leading American politicians, conservative as well as liberal, at their lack of imagination, castigating both Herbert Hoover and Norman Thomas for their failure to exceed their respective ideological constraints. Clearly, he saw himself as a man who brought imagination to his own life and work. You have to read this book to grasp his meaning, for at first glance, he seems to have been kidding himself. He was by reputation a dull speaker, and his books display an edge of pedantry. Yet he had his own kind of imagination, born of his conviction that the end of human work and action is "to know God, and enjoy him forever."

When, in 1953, Kirk produced *The Conservative Mind*, he had no way of knowing that he had picked a golden moment. America had barely recovered from the great Depression and World War II, both of which cast doubt on the long-reigning assumptions of liberalism. The cold war swung public opinion to the right, but without a guiding theory, or even a clear sensibility. Kirk's book, an intellectual history and a guidebook of political principles, was not meant to offer a practical program, but it did provide an orientation and a rallying point. The more honest precincts of the liberal community recognized it not only as an admirable work of scholarship and interpretation, but as a formidable challenge to their own worldview.

Shortly thereafter, William F. Buckley—young, brash, talented—launched *National Review* and accomplished what had been deemed impossible. He united a fractious right, or most of it, from its libertarians and free-marketeers to its traditionalists; and with anti-communism as a common denominator, he drew together right-wing neo-evangelical Protestants, Roman Catholics, Jews and even atheists. In the early 1950s conservatism was regarded as obsolete, and a little ridiculous. "Conservative thought" seemed an oxymoron. Eisenhower Republicanism was about as far to the right as the country was expected to go and, contrary to the liberal jeremiads, that was not very far. Eisenhower Republicanism sought to rationalize, to manage and to restrain New Deal liberalism, not to overthrow it. *National Review*, by contrast, became a catalyst for those who believed a reversal of national fortunes possible. Without Buckley's aggressive yet patient work, the eventual triumph of Ronald Reagan would not have been possible. The contribution of Kirk's book, as well as Richard Weaver's *Ideas Have Consequences* (1948) and Robert Nisbet's *The Quest for Community* (1953), to both of which Kirk pays tribute, could hardly be overestimated. Indeed, if Buckley had had his way, Kirk would have left his quiet study to assume the editorship of *National Review*.

The Sword of Imagination contains a chapter-long sketch of Kirk's brand of conservatism. He was an old Tory who never cottoned to free-market ideology, which he always recognized as an invitation to social atomization. He is acerbic on Ayn Rand and other libertarians who attack "altruism," which he defines as the "theological virtue of charity." He replies to Rand's exaltation of self-interest: "Literally, she would have put the dollar sign in the place of the cross." In contrast, like other traditionalists, Kirk pits conservatism against all ideology. He cites, approvingly, H. Stuart Hughes's characterization of conservatism as "the negation of ideology."

On economics, a subject to which he paid less attention than he might have, Kirk prefers Wilhelm Röpke to Ludwig von Mises, since Röpke sought a Third Way of "humanized" economic activity between free-market capitalism and socialist regimentation. For Kirk, that meant "restoring property, function, and dignity to the mass of folk." To put it another way, Kirk prefers the spirit of *Rerum Novarum* (which, curiously, he does not discuss) to the spirit of radical individualism and the cult of marketplace rationality. (In *On the Conditions of Labor*, which was produced in 1891, Pope Leo XIII condemned socialism, affirmed the natural right to property, blistered the callousness of capitalism and demanded that state power protect the poor.) "Really," he writes, "the world is governed, in any age, not by rationality but by faith: by love, loyalty, and imagination." Although Kirk much admired Weaver's *Ideas Have Consequences*, he criticized it sharply for asserting an absolute right in private property, "a notion that cannot be sustained in any society."

Kirk worked for the Ford corporation for a while and he came to admire Henry Ford. His brief account is memorable for its sympathetic treatment of the man and his achievements, combined with an acute criticism of Ford-like capitalism for its consumerism and its destructive effects on community. Not surprisingly, Kirk identifies avarice as the greatest sin of the twentieth century, and he lashes out against "the same infatuation with rationalism that terribly damages communal existence also produces unquestioning confidence in the competitive market economy and a heartless individualism." To counterpoise to Marxism "another abstraction called 'capitalism' is to deliver one's self bound to the foe."

Conservatives must defend a free economy, he argues, but only as it is "bound up with a complex social structure of order and justice and freedom, founded upon an understanding of man as a moral being." Neither Kirk nor his fellow traditionalists could devise a coherent economic program to steer between socialism and the moral anarchy of the free market. The resultant tension in their politics has surfaced again recently, in the efforts to bring to power a coalition of "social conservatives" and "economic conservatives." To Kirk's credit, he never let his readers forget that the tension exists, and that it must be overcome if the Right is to wean the American people from its adherence to the chimeras of the Left.

Personal experience as well as voracious reading shaped Kirk's views. He lived for a while in the South, where he discovered a conservative sensibility much to his taste, and his service in the Army during World War II also left a mark on his thinking. Like many American conservative intellectuals, Kirk came from the working class. His account of the travails of his father, a railroad worker, and of the white and black workers in a small community in Michigan, has much to teach about the resistance of the workers of the American heartland to the siren calls of left-wing and right-wing radicalism during the terrible depression of the 1930s. "The boy Russell scarcely understood how the sparse surviving population of Mecosta subsisted." Yet the people of Mecosta, including some blacks from pre-Civil War times, pulled together despite much reduced incomes, and "were not so desperate as certain school textbooks would have the public believe."

Kirk made his mark as an undergraduate at Michigan State, publishing in the *South Atlantic Quarterly* and other journals that assumed they were receiving manuscripts from a professor. At Duke University, when he was 24, he

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

wrote a master's thesis on John Randolph of Roanoke. It was published as *Randolph of Roanoke: A Study in Conservative Thought* and republished in later years in expanded versions. One of the best studies of its subject, it provides a strong antidote to the bigoted nonsense peddled by Henry Adams, among others, according to which the typical Southerner does not have a mind, but only a temperament. He disappointed his professors' expectations that he would go on to doctoral work at Duke, but he went off to St. Andrews in Scotland, where he did the work that led to *The Conservative Mind.*

A good part of Kirk's income came from a nationally syndicated column, which he used to promote the fortunes of Barry Goldwater's bid for the presidency and the conservative cause generally. But Kirk also wrote novels, especially reveling in his Gothic romances; and in 1961 he scored a critical and financial success with *Old House of Fear.* His experiences as a student and then a professor at Michigan State University soured him on higher education, which he regarded as largely a sham and a particularly damaging manifestation of the cult of radical leveling; and so, when *The Conservative Mind* sold widely, and he found that he could support his family by writing and lecturing, he fled academia. Yet he saw himself primarily as a teacher.

Kirk refused to make concessions to the semi-literacy of his age. He writes on many subjects as if his readers were as well-read as himself; but he also knows better, and so he spells out matters he would have been able to take for granted in the age in which he might have preferred to live. Thus the first two pages of his autobiography contain references to no fewer than nine authors or texts, from the ancients to Pico della Mirandola, from Gustave Le Bon to Flannery O'Connor: all of which may seem a bit much, but Kirk somehow manages to make his prose flow, so that what might have become pedantry turns into graceful instruction. When he invokes the Bible, he proceeds as if his readers will recognize the passages to which he alludes. A hundred years or so ago, he would have been right.

Religious faith loomed large in Kirk's life. "The doctrine of the soul," he writes, "which old Plato proclaimed his principal teaching, is denied by many today—especially by those styling themselves intellectuals—and uneasily neglected by many more." When he was still a child, he writes, he "became aware that he was more than a person: the *persona,* after all, means a mask merely. He was a soul; if a soul in a fleshly prison, still a soul." That conviction, he observes, "sweeps away the 'identity crisis' so much written about in recent years." And that conviction "gave the boy whatever strength he was to possess in later years." The "whatever strength" turned out to be a rock.

Kirk did not grow up in a church-going family, but his mother and his aunts read a child's version of the Bible to him and encouraged him to pray. His mother was a Spiritualist, and he imbibed from her and from others the mystical streak, and the fascination with the occult, that remained with him throughout his life. (Of the many honors that came his way, he seems to have taken special delight in being dubbed by the Count Dracula Society of Los Angeles a "Knight Commander of the Order of Count Dracula.")

The young Kirk respected the Christian churches and their teachings, but he seems to have been one of those deluded souls who think that being a Christian means solely to be a person who tries to live a good life. A long time went by before Kirk accepted Jesus as his savior rather than as a gifted moral philosopher. His conversion came slowly; there was no spiritual crisis, no road to Damascus. Indeed, his account stresses the intellectual conversion so

"One of America's most impressive—and most important—social critics and intellectuals. To the unconvinced, I would simply say: read this superb collection. It will provide you with all the evidence you need."
—William J. Bennett

NEO-CONSERVATISM

Selected Essays

IRVING KRISTOL

THE FREE PRESS
A Division of Simon & Schuster

The Autobiography of an Idea

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

strongly that a reader might wonder where the Holy Spirit fit in. In any case, he seems to have felt himself in grace by 1953, when he took instruction to enter the Catholic Church and wrote *The Conservative Mind.* (For reasons that remain unclear, he did not receive baptism and confirmation in the Church until 1964, when he married Annette Yvonne Cecile Courtemanche, a devout Catholic.) In 1952, as his faith was deepening, he remarked that "we must begin with the principle that fear of God is the beginning of wisdom." A startled colleague replied, "You mean the love of God, don't you, Russell?" Kirk held his ground, citing Scripture as commanding the one rather than the other. He had a point, but I doubt that he was reading Scripture as carefully as he might have read it. In any event, it is the inseparability of the fear of God and the love of God which informs his work.

Kirk's discussion of education in his memoir may strike his readers with special force. He takes dead aim at modernism. "Modernism," he writes, "is not confined to any especial party, faction, or class; rather, it is a cast of mind and character. The Modernist mentality, aspiring to universal dominion, ranges from cosmology to sexuality; and everywhere it is overweeningly arrogant." Long before Allan Bloom and the present generation of educational critics came along, Kirk was a stern critic of American education. He entered the lists against John Dewey and "progressive education" and, in the days when few were listening, warned about the loss of nerve and the dumbing-down that has produced the educational catastrophe in which we are now living.

The Sword of Imagination also includes judicious and incisive sketches of the extraordinary figures whom Kirk encountered in a busy life, especially T.S. Eliot and Flannery O'Connor. It is not surprising to find loving portrayals of Ronald Reagan and other men and women of the Right, nor to find a mixed review of Richard Nixon, whose abilities Kirk admired but whom he apparently did not trust. But neither is it surprising to find this well-tempered man writing generously about some of his adversaries, most notably Norman Thomas, Eugene McCarthy and Dick Gregory. He saw Thomas as a good, principled man, who was just about unbeatable as a debater. He considered McCarthy a conservative and supported his presidential campaign in 1976. And Gregory, he says, was "a man of real courage and honesty," who was "sufficiently humorous and good-natured to restrain crowds, through the power of persuasion, from turning into mobs."

Then there is Kirk's love life. He spares us an account of the more intimate details, though his mode of expression suggests that he may well have remained celibate until he married. Whatever agony his sexual restraint may have caused him he passes over in silence, as a matter between himself and his God. He must have known, moreover, that the story of his courtship and marriage to the young, beautiful, intelligent Annette Courtemanche would invite scorn in our twisted times. In a previous century, it would have ranked as a great love story.

Courtemanche was only 19 when he first saw her, and he seems to have fallen in love with her at first sight. To his astonishment, as they became friends, she preferred him to the younger men who were courting her. He could not bring himself to propose to her, since he assumed she would refuse and he would lose her friendship altogether: "It did not enter Kirk's head ... that one day Miss Courtemanche might choose to marry *him.*" As he explains, "Kirk was forty-two years old, not handsome, totally unaccomplished in the arts of dancing and swimming, proficiency in which usually is expected of men by pretty girls." Finally, on what came to be known as the Letter Day, the exasperated Miss Courtemanche wrote to him, "I have decided that our marriage is inevitable." Russell and Annette Kirk and their four daughters made their home, "Piety Hill," in the village of Mecosta, Michigan, and their home became a refuge for countless friends and strangers.

Kirk led his life in his own way, but his way did not include the pretense that he could have done it without God, family and friends. It is a measure of the man that these memoirs pass over the unsavory personal attacks that were heaped upon him by intellectuals who were often his lessers. To the suggestion that his life seems quixotic, he fairly replies that "unlike Don Quixote de la Mancha, Kirk generally kept a cheerful countenance, to the vexation of certain reviewers of his books." In so many ways, Russell Kirk seems like a creature in mothballs. As we survey the wreckage of a century that he did his best to civilize, let's hear it for the mothballs.

EUGENE D. GENOVESE's most recent book is *The Southern Front: History and Politics in the Cultural War* (University of Missouri Press).

Get a good night's sleep (and perhaps even save your marriage), with...

SnoreStopper only $49.95*

***But read this ad for an even better deal!**

If you (or your mate) are snorers, you know how disruptive it can be to your sleep. Snoring destroys your sleep patterns, your dreams, your comfort. Your long-suffering mate probably gets even less sleep than you do. Out of sheer necessity, many have opted to sleep in separate bedrooms. Really, it doesn't help relationships at all!

You may have tried many things to get rid of your snoring problem, but in all likelihood to no avail. *SnoreStopper* is a radically new approach that has proven successful in tens of thousands of cases. Wear *SnoreStopper* on you wrist, just as you would a watch. At the slightest snore, you'll feel (subconsciously, so as not to wake you!) an electronic "tingle" on the surface of your skin, which will cause you to shift position and will interrupt the snoring pattern. You won't wake up—you'll sleep the whole night through and will wake up rested and refreshed. And, just as important, so will your mate!

We import *SnoreStopper* in very large quantities and are therefore able to offer it at just $49.95. But we have an even better deal: ***Buy two for $99.90 and we'll send you a third one, with our compliments—absolutely FREE!*** Make a small investment in healthful sleeping (and perhaps even save or rekindle your marriage). Get your *SnoreStopper(s)* today!

*•The concept of **SnoreStopper** has been proven effective at a university sleep lab. **SnoreStopper** works on two sets of mercury cells; they are included.*

FOR FASTEST SERVICE, ORDER
TOLL FREE (800) 797-7367
24 Hours a Day, 7 Days a Week.

Please give order Code **#1029G293.** If you prefer, mail check or card authorization and expiration. We need daytime phone # for all orders and issuing bank for charge orders. Add $4.95 standard shipping/insurance charge (plus sales tax for CA delivery). You have 30-day return and one-year warranty. We do not refund shipping charges.

For quantity orders (100+), call Peaches Jeffries, our Wholesale/Premium Manager at (415) 543-6675 or write her at the address below.

since 1967
haverhills®
185 Berry St., San Francisco, CA 94107

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Smells and Bells

BY PAUL ELIE

The Sign of the Cross: Travels in Catholic Europe by Colm Tóibín

(Pantheon, 296 pp., $24)

The lapsed Catholic is "as boring a figure as the stage Irishman, and sometimes the same figure," Anthony Burgess declared in his memoirs. "What makes him a bore is his lachrymosity, especially in drink, about being a bad son who has struck his mother and dare not go home. There is also the matter, also in his cups, of claiming to belong to an international club to which he will not pay his subscription (this, in the form of obligatory communion, falls due every Easter)." Yet the lapsed Catholic's claim that he still belongs to the Church, Burgess went on, "is not entirely false; indeed, it does not go far enough. For Catholicism is, in a paradox, a bigger thing than the faith. It is a kind of supranationality that makes one despise small patriotisms."

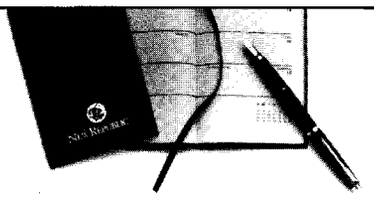
Burgess was himself a lapsed Catholic of Irish extraction, and the faint note of contempt he struck about his own kind was rare. For another trait common to lapsed Catholics is the way each tells his or her story as a personal triumph, a victory against great odds, even at a time when it seems that more Catholics lose their faith than keep it. The tropes are as worn smooth as the feet of a plaster Jesus in an old parish church. The Church is communal, often suffocatingly so. Apostasy is a breaking away from the group. The lapsed Catholic falls upward, and he falls alone.

The Irish writer Colm Tóibín conforms to the type. Born in 1955 in Enniscorthy, a small Irish town, and the author of two travel books and two novels, he too is a lapsed Catholic, and the traits identified by Burgess are his guiding lights in *The Sign of the Cross*, an account of his travels to manifestly Catholic places across Europe. There is drink, lots of it. There are Tóibín's efforts to make his Easter duty in his own fashion by visiting sites of pilgrimage during Holy Week. And there is his sense that he remains a member of the Catholic "supranationality," and so can regard his travels as encounters with those of his Catholic relations, so to speak, who persist in believing. As foreigners, they are strangers to him. As Catholics, they are kin. As believers they are (depending on his mood) either a mystery or a people whose small patriotisms offend his cosmopolitan sensibility. His task in the book is to make sense of all this. It isn't easy.

After a friend announced that he had lost his faith, Tóibín realized that he had never had faith at all. He was 14. "I had always known that the interest all around me in security, money, power and status was greater than any love of God or belief in his mercy," he writes. "Religion was consolation, like listening to music after a long day's work; it was pure theatre, it was a way of holding people together." He followed the lapsed Catholic's familiar course through literary modernism, went to university ("I knew no one who believed"), then left Ireland for Barcelona. "I did not think about Catholicism again for some years," he tells us. "It did not cost me a thought."

He must be exaggerating, you think; then again, maybe not. When Tóibín did think about Catholicism again, in his own account, it was as a subject for a piece. He was in Dublin, the pope was coming, he needed work. A year later he returned to Barcelona by way of Lourdes—due to the flow of Irish pilgrims, the fare was good—and the curiosity he felt there evidently led him to write the present book. During his boyhood his relatives had made the trip to Lourdes, and the souvenirs they brought back—"large plastic bottles of Lourdes water with shoulder straps, or smaller bottles in the shape of Our Lady of Lourdes with a blue screw-cap top"—were his "first intimations of the world outside Ireland." Here he is not just caressing the not-so-divine details of Catholic kitsch; he is announcing his themes. His pilgrimages will be trips to "the real Europe," and reckonings with his Catholic past, such as it is.

A series of travels to places where Catholicism is still seen as "an aspect of the rich fabric of things": it is a good



ANNOUNCING
THE NEW REPUBLIC
1996 POCKET DIARY

For the past few years, we have been giving pocket diaries, embossed in gold with The New Republic name and logo, to our writers and editors and special friends in the media. The diaries have been so popular that we have decided to make them available to our subscribers at a low cost, only $11.95 each.

The diaries are made by Letts of London, whose diaries were favored by Charles Dickens and George Bernard Shaw. Each Diary includes weekly calendars with space to write down daily appointments, plus a wine vintage chart, a list of important toll-free telephone numbers, and addresses, and more.

The pages are edged in gilt and carry a silken page marker. The diary itself is dark blue with featherweight light-blue pages.

It's elegant and easy to use. The cost to non-subscribers is $13.95, but we're offering it to subscribers for just $11.95, *including* postage.

AVAILABLE TO OUR SUBSCRIBERS FOR A LIMITED TIME

YES, Send me the New Republic pocket diary immediately. (Please allow 2 to 4 weeks for delivery.)

❑ I am a subscriber, $11.95

❑ I am not a subscriber, $13.95

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State____ Zip_____

Write to: Pocket Diary, Dept. A, The New Republic, 1220 19th St. NW, Washington, DC 20036

Check or Money-Order must accompany each order

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

idea for a book, and one with a long pedigree among Catholic writers, from the peregrinations of Greene and Waugh to Richard Rodriguez's superb account of his visits to the California missions in *Days of Obligation*. Tóibín's itinerary is impressive: he visited Poland (including Auschwitz), Seville and Santiago de Compostela in Spain, Estonia, Lithuania, Croatia, Bavaria, Slovenia, Slovakia, Italy, and Catholic Glasgow, and sojourned among Irish and English Catholics as well. He takes the *Granta* approach. He arrives in a country and wanders and looks and listens, scrupulously honoring his own impressions. He meets a local expert, and their conversations allow him to fold in background material and the best bits from books on the region. He trails the faithful on their formal pilgrimages—the climb up Croagh Patrick in Ireland, the pilgrimage of St. James in Spain, the trip to the site of the Medjugorje visitations in Croatia. From all this he aims to bring out the religious dimensions of conflicts that have made headlines in the West.

There is also the matter of Tóibín's own negotiation with Catholicism. From time to time he rubs his lapsarian's faith against the living faith of the Catholics around him, to see whether sparks fly. As he has confessed, however, even when he had faith it was vague and grudging, all atmosphere and no content, and his journalistic reckonings with religion have a similar character. At their best they are efforts to fill an empty vessel, to give depth and weight to his own sense of the faith whose hold on him was once as strong culturally as it was weak theologically. At worst, they are sneering asides. When he was a boy, Tóibín's Catholicism consisted of watching Catholics stick out their tongues for the communion wafer; now he is a man, and he is free to stand aside and stick his tongue out at them.

The book's opening pages are its strongest. On a return trip to Lourdes, Tóibín decided to "take the waters" (the baths that are believed to cure the sick through the Virgin Mary's intercession) and his account is a model of its kind—shapely and entertaining, with just the right balance struck between reportage and personal experience, reflection and low comedy. As he stood in line, Tóibín wondered if bathing suits would be provided. Surely the pilgrims weren't expected to wade in naked—it was a Catholic shrine, after all. Told to strip to his underwear, he panicked: "I wondered if I was wearing underpants, and when I realised that I was, I panicked once more, wondering if they were clean." Finally he dropped his drawers, and a handler wrapped a towel around him and held him down in the waters. As he came up, he was shaking—from the cold, and from the elemental nature of the act: he had "felt something of the power of the place, the amount of hope and spirit which had been let loose within these walls over the years." Lost in thought, he put his underwear back on with the fly in the rear. The handler kindly interceded. "He ... suggested that I come back and do it right," Tóibín recalls. "There was all the time in the world, he said," and then held up the towel as a shield while Tóibín put on his pants the right way around. It is a funny, touching episode, and even the false note at the end ("Outside, the light seemed blindingly sharp and intense") doesn't spoil its effect.

Tóibín's record of his stay in Poland, by contrast, is a jumble of impressions, and in his effort to convey them to the reader he abandons his gift for precise, lyrical writing in favor of truculent generalizations and descriptive shorthand. We can't quite see what he saw, but we are asked to think what he thought. (Wisely, he does not try to be clever at Auschwitz, and leaves his shifty subjectivity behind.) In Krakow, the young Catholics waiting to make their confession "were so well-behaved, so mild and obedient-looking, I wondered what sins they had committed"; in the Catholic church in Danzig, "the faces again were serious and intent; no one looked around, or allowed themselves to be distracted." When Tóibín emerged from the church, he was dismayed to find the commercial district shut down for Easter, and had no choice but to go to the café in the railway station (it was "dreary and underlit"). He was relieved when, some hours later, his train reached Berlin: there, going to "the trendy places" with a friend, "I could relax, feel at home." The travel writer is tired of strange places and people who aren't like him, and he has many stages left on his pilgrimage.

Tóibín's weariness of what he calls "the twilit world of half-medieval Catholicism" and the people who inhabit it comes to dominate *The Sign of the Cross*, but this has less to do with their Catholicism than with his own. Perhaps he was simply overwhelmed by the scope of his project. Who wouldn't be? A dozen countries, each with its own mix of religion, culture, and politics, often a thousand years in the making; the barriers of language, and the limitations of brief visits; and the flaw in the working method which supposes that other cultures can be adequately understood through their Palm Sunday processions or Guy Fawkes' night revelries. (Only a foolhardy journalist would base an analysis of Italian-American Catholics in New York on a visit to the San Gennaro festival.)

Given all this, it is remarkable how much background material Tóibín does manage to bring into the book. His

In Memory of Clifford Brown

It's not the color blue, it's the color cold.
It's the Atlantic's color you've got no eyes for
in the middle of February. And though you sport a coat,
you're flat on your naked back upon the ice-floe.

It's not a regular ice-floe, meltdown-prone.
It's an argument that all warmth is foreign.
It's alone in the ocean, and you're on it alone,
and the trumpet's song is like mercury falling.

It's not a guileless tune that chafes in the darkness, though;
it's the gloveless, frozen to C-sharp fingers.
And a glistening drop soars to the zenith, so
as to glance at the space with no retina's interference.

It's not a simple space, it's a nothing with
alts attaining in height what they lose in color
while a spotlight is drifting into the wings,
aping the ice-floe and waxing polar.

JOSEPH BRODSKY

Translated from the Russian by the Author

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

chapters on the formerly communist countries are thick with the details of ground-level religion and politics, which he introduces through transcriptions of his talks with local leaders and intellectuals. In Vilnius, a monsignor and labor-camp veteran explained to him why Catholicism atrophied under Communism in Lithuania while it thrived in Poland, even though both were technically parts of the Polish church. (Paradoxically, the two peoples were brought together in fondness for the pope when the Vatican recognized Lithuania as an independent diocese in 1992.) In Croatia, an American Franciscan in residence near the shrine of Medjugorje derided the Serbian Orthodox Church as "a store-front religion," but gently mocked his coreligionists as well: "Only Croatian Catholics would live on this rockpile," he told Tóibín with a smile. In Bratislava, Juraj Mihalik, a former deputy prime minister of Czechoslovakia, told why he would rather make pottery than serve as Slovak ambassador to the United States.

When he is left to his own devices, Tóibín's accounts of his travels are listless and enervated. Here and there he comes up with passages of sharp, telling observation; but more often his eye for the particular is trained on the petty details of his own itinerary. The trains are slow, the rooms shabby, the food unsatisfying. His hangover is "a new sort of hangover. I did not have a headache, or an urge to get sick. I felt, instead, that I had been run over by a train." In Seville, he stands at the feast-day processions "dreaming of an L-shaped bar in the heart of the old quarter to which I had developed a special devotion." Whether in Galacia or Bratislava or Medjugorje, he is desperate to find a clean, well-lighted place where the beer is good and the spirits are high and the patrons are people like himself. He seeks the exotic, but he craves the familiar.

In the nearly 300 pages of Tóibín's book there is no emerging story, and little deepening of his understanding of Catholicism or the European cultures that it has shaped. He is honest, though, about the limitations of his inquiries. In the next-to-last chapter, having attended Easter Mass at St. Peter's Basilica, he confesses his disappointment over the plainness of the liturgy—it was as plain as it had been in Ireland in the 1960s. He had expected the Roman pomp and splendor "to take me somewhere I had not been before, to give me a sense of what it is like to be at the centre of things. Instead, it had taken me home, and made home seem like the centre of things." He wonders whether that was the point. "Maybe that was important and instructive," he writes. "I did not know."

His candor is appealing, but it is an unsatisfying conclusion to a book about places that are distinctive (in his own set-up) because Catholicism is seen and felt to be vital there. While Tóibín is intrigued by the expressions of Catholicism he finds abroad, he is less than curious about what is actually being expressed. For its adherents, the Catholic faith is a way of understanding the world, and what it proposes in some way governs how they act, whether in festal processions or civil wars; but Tóibín never really examines "Catholic Europe" at the level of belief, never presses beyond what he sees and hears to explore the ideas and the symbols beneath.

His own lapsed Catholicism seems to be the reason why. When Anthony Burgess wrote of the lapsed Catholic's habit of despising "small patriotisms," he was referring to the way the Catholic of his temperament (and, it may be said, of his generation) had been trained in a set of propositions about the world which, even after he had lapsed, led him to see Anglicanism or positivism or liberalism as full of holes, and to find them unsatisfactory. For a lapsed Catholic of Tóibín's temperament (and of his generation), Catholicism is mainly smells and bells, a matter of context rather than content; it is easily shaken off, and easily sentimentalized later on. Tóibín has the manner of a war correspondent, but he is writing about a war that (in his own soul at least) was won—or lost—long ago. Once he found Catholicism wanting, so now he finds it unworthy of full penetration.

What is most distinctive about the Catholics whom Tóibín meets abroad, perhaps, is that they regard Catholicism as transcultural, a bearer of normative truths. Yet it is precisely the transcultural aspect of Catholicism that keeps Tóibín from seeing this. His background and his sense that he remains a member of the Catholic "supranationality" lead him to take faith for granted and to focus on its manifestations. One can't imagine him writing about the religions of Asia, say, without exploring doctrine as well as spectacle; because Catholicism is still his in some way, however, he feels free to do what he likes with it. But Catholicism, even as it sponsors the individual's impulse to order and judge the world, is notoriously resistant to the lone writer's desire to subjugate it for his own purposes—and that, in better books than this one, is the source of dramatic tension. Tóibín isn't dead to this tension; he just doesn't care enough to summon it up.

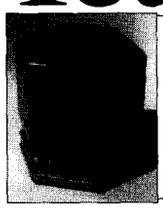
There is a point in *The Sign of the Cross* when Tóibín does reckon viscerally with his childhood Catholicism and its claim upon him as an adult. In the chapter that gives the book its title, Tóibín tells of the time he underwent a group therapy session led by a Jungian friend. The group assembled in a dark church, and over two days, aided by fast breathing exercises and spontaneous painting—and an injection of the drug ketamine—Tóibín was transported to the time after his father's death, when he was 12. "I felt the shock and the powerlessness and the grief; fierce, absolute things," he writes; and suddenly he found himself compelled to make the sign of the cross over his vision of his father's dead body. "And then I did it. I made the sign of the cross in the air, over and over. I had no choice."

Twenty centuries of European Catholicism are found wanting in favor of *that?* It is a loopy, moving episode, but its effect is to call attention to the way Tóibín hasn't managed to connect his own experience of religion with those of his subjects. Religious writers have struggled in every age to reconcile the experience of the divine with its expression, and Tóibín's failure to do so is hardly unique; even so, this book feels like a lost opportunity, an account of strangers scarcely met, a pilgrimage barely begun.

PAUL ELIE is the editor of *A Tremor of Bliss: Contemporary Writers on the Saints* (Riverhead Books).

Zoo in Watertown, New York changed from animal prison to humane natural habitat. Now trying for federal Zoo law. For more information contact P.O. Box 428, Waterfown, New York, 13601-0428. Or phone 315-782-1858.

TeaBox



$19.95 EXCELLENT GIFT!
SOLID WALNUT
VISA/MC Add $4 for Ship. & Hand.
GALATEA
1-800-876-3172
HANDMADE IN RUSSIA

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

WASHINGTON DIARIST

Saab story

AT A TIME WHEN INEQUALITY IS on the rise and little can be done to stop it, it's important to restore the civic life of the nation. This is a point made eloquently by my colleague, Mickey Kaus, in his book, *The End of Equality*. I agree. More and more, the country seems to be divided along lines of class and taste that sour everyday life. Saabs, Netscape, Banana Republic on one side; Chevys, True Value and Wal-Mart on the other. The solutions are elusive; the balms few. But one of them, surely, is sports, which binds a community like nothing else. My recommendation? More public ownership of teams. Screw privatization. It would be better if municipalities owned their own teams instead of being held hostage to the whims of fickle owners. Baltimore's acquisition of the Cleveland Browns football team is a good case in point. Unlike some cities that are ambivalent about their franchises—baseball's Houston Astros drew dismal crowds this year, sometimes as low as 10,000—Cleveland loves its football. Its decades-long rivalry with the Pittsburgh Steelers is one of the great emotional battles in the industrial heartland. But the Browns's owner, Art Modell, has found it more economical to take the team to Baltimore, where the State of Maryland was prepared to, for all practical purposes, build him a stadium and give him whatever revenues it derives. (Baltimore itself is a jilted lover; its beloved Colts left for Indianapolis in 1984.) Private ownership was fine in the days before teams moved with such velocity. But today, teams move frequently because much of the profit in the game comes from purloining the best stadium deal you can. This is especially true in the NFL, which has seen more movement lately than at any other time in its history. This year has brought two other big moves. The Houston Oilers are bound for Nashville. The famed L.A. Rams now take the field in St. Louis. Even if you draw big fans, as Cleveland did, it makes sense for an owner to move. So why shouldn't cities actually own their own teams? They could hire managers and a front office to run the show. (That way, the teams wouldn't be stymied by civil service rules.) And, most importantly, the team would stay put.

ALONG WITH SAABS, SLUMMING IS another class marker. If you've ever seen a slew of tuxedo-clad preppies winding up in a late-night diner, smirking at the linoleum, you know what I mean. When I was growing up in a comfortable New Jersey suburb, one of our thrills in high school was to drive to the White Castle franchise in a dangerous neighborhood. The soggy mini-burgers, purchased by the bag, were pretty awful. But venturing into a menacing neighborhood gave us all an adolescent frisson. I suspect I was not alone, then or now, in enjoying such a romp. The phenomenon seems to have spread prolifically. It's the kind of sneering that makes it hard to have a sensible discussion of race and class.

IS IT POSSIBLE TO talk about class differences in a way that's observant and not mean and bitter? Well, take Danny Hoch, the performance artist. Earlier this year, I saw his one-man show, "Some People," in which he portrays a slew of ethnic New York characters, from a smooth-talking Caribbean deejay trying to pick up women over the air to a racist stockbroker type complaining about the Asian take-out guy who screwed up his order. I usually can't stand shows with a message. But this one was funny, not preachy. Hoch's point is that the dismissive phrase "Some People" makes no sense. All of these groups that seem so easy to stereotype are deeply complex. I saw the show in Aspen with a well-heeled crowd attending an arts festival. My sense was that these folks were genuinely touched. (Whether they took the empathy back to their offices, who knows?)

YOU CAN SEE BOTH THE EMPAthetic and the sneering sides of commentary about class in the writings of Jane and Michael Stern. The pair have made a living out of writing about classic—i.e., homespun—American cuisine. For years, their book *Roadfood* has been my soulmate as I've traveled the country, particularly the South, as a reporter. From the Georgia Pig in Brunswick, Georgia, to Ted Peter's Famous Smoked Fish, near Tampa, to the Loveless café outside of Nashville, the book chronicles great out-of-the-way eateries. It's not camp. It's respectful and even, when they're talking about a nice gumbo, reverential. But the Sterns' more recent *Encyclopedia of Bad Taste* adopts a supercilious tone. The title itself betrays disdain rather than affection. And each entry—from Aerosol Cheese to Lawrence Welk—is meant to convey contempt for those who have the audacity—the bad taste—to like such things. I preferred the Sterns in their other mode. Wonder Bread, one of the entries, has only a limited appeal, most of it camp. On the other hand, the smoked mullet at Ted Peter's, best consumed with a beer on one of the eatery's picnic benches, is sublime.

BRIDGING CLASS DIFFERENCES has been the aspiration of the communitarian movement. Its guiding principle is that the country is too divided, too attached to its libertarian leanings. For the most part, I'm sympathetic to communitarian goals, especially national service. But I can't stomach their soul-searching review of no-fault divorce laws—and I'm not even married. Bill Galston, the academic, is someone I respect, but his ideas for reforming no-fault divorce give me the willies. Still, you have to admire his honesty. If people are really out to preserve family structure, there's no getting around the fact that draconian measures are what's needed. Getting rid of the marriage tax or reforming AFDC isn't, I'm afraid, going to arrest the worldwide trend toward family disintegration. Why is it that I can't imagine avatars of family values Newt Gingrich and Bob Dole (or, for that matter, Bob Kerrey and Ted Kennedy) decrying no-fault divorce? Galston at least has the courage of his convictions. Do the conservatives?

STARBUCKS, THE NOW-CELEBRATED home of the $3 coffee seems, at first, to be the epitome of a kind of social snobbery. But I actually think Starbucks is Good for America. It blurs class-and-taste divisions. By taking the once-exclusive world of the bohemian coffee house and making it into a McDonald's-style marketing phenomenon, they've actually, like the Gap, diminished the rifts that separate us. The adversarial culture of the coffee house—with its Dada poetry and Gitanes—has been replaced by something more embracing—clean, panel-lined, familiar. The elite becomes the mass. The aloof is rendered friendly. Does this sound like another tortured rationale for more inequality? I hope not. Foamy milk shouldn't have to be the enemy of democracy.

MATTHEW COOPER

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

7/8 of America's wealth controlled by 1/8 of the population

42% of America's wealth controlled by 1% of the population

Contrary to countless editorials, it would seem that the concentration of wealth is nothing new.

What is new is the nature of wealth. Where once the powerful owned fiery factories, today they are more likely to control cubicles crammed with software engineers.

How, then, to thrive in this new world order... and, equally important, in the next world order.

An education is probably a good place to start. An education that stresses the power of original thinking. Passionate thinking. Thinking, period.

An education that embraces the wealth of ideas we call the Western tradition even while debating the future of that tradition as part of the Adelphi Centennial.

An education, in short, much like the one Adelphi graduates have received for the past 100 years.

1896 1996

ADELPHI UNIVERSITY
GARDEN CITY, NY 11530

A CENTURY OF COMMITMENT TO INTELLECT

For more information, call 1-800-ADELPHI

©1995 Adelphi University

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ABSOLUT® VODKA. PRODUCT OF SWEDEN. 40 AND 50% ALC/VOL (80 AND 100 PROOF). 100% GRAIN NEUTRAL SPIRITS. ABSOLUT, COUNTRY OF SWEDEN VODKA & LOGO, ABSOLUT, ABSOLUT BOTTLE DESIGN AND ABSOLUT CALLIGRAPHY ARE TRADEMARKS OWNED BY V&S VIN & SPRIT AB. ©1995 V&S VIN & SPRIT AB. IMPORTED BY THE HOUSE OF SEAGRAM, NEW YORK, NY. PHOTOGRAPHED BY STEVE BRONSTEIN.

THOSE WHO APPRECIATE QUALITY ENJOY IT RESPONSIBLY.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED